

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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NO NAME.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "THE WOMAN IN WHITE," &c.

CHAPTER X.

ON returning to Sea View, Mr. Noel Vanstone executed the instructions which prescribed his line of conduct for the first of the five days, with unimpeachable accuracy. A faint smile of contempt hovered about Mrs. Lecount's lips, while the story of Mr. Bygrave's attempt to pass off his spurious pictures as originals was in progress, but she did not trouble herself to utter a single word of remark, when it had come to an end. "Just what I said!" thought Mr. Noel Vanstone, cunningly watching her face—"she doesn't believe a word of it!"

The next day the meeting occurred on the parade. Mr. Bygrave took off his hat; and Mr. Noel Vanstone looked the other way. The captain's start of surprise and scowl of indignation, were executed to perfection—but they plainly failed to impose on Mrs. Lecount. "I am afraid, sir, you have offended Mr. Bygrave to-day," she ironically remarked. "Happily for you, he is an excellent Christian; and I venture to predict that he will forgive you to-morrow."

Mr. Noel Vanstone wisely refrained from committing himself to an answer. Once more, he privately applauded his own penetration; once more, he triumphed over his ingenious friend.

Thus far, the captain's instructions had been too clear and simple to be mistaken by any one. But they advanced in complication with the advance of time; and on the third day Mr. Noel Vanstone fell confusedly into the commission of a slight error. After expressing the necessary weariness of Aldborough, and the consequent anxiety for change of scene, he was met (as he had anticipated) by an immediate suggestion from the housekeeper, recommending a visit to St. Crux. In giving his answer to the advice thus tendered, he made his first mistake. Instead of deferring his decision until the next day, he accepted Mrs. Lecount's suggestion on the day when it was offered to him.

The consequences of this error were of no great importance. The housekeeper merely set herself to watch her master, one day earlier than had been calculated on—a result which had been already provided for by the wise precautionary

measures of forbidding Mr. Noel Vanstone all communication with North Shingles. Doubting, as Captain Wragge had foreseen, the sincerity of her master's desire to break off his connexion with the Bygraves by going to St. Crux, Mrs. Lecount tested the truth or falsehood of the impression produced on her own mind, by vigilantly watching for signs of secret communication on one side or on the other. The close attention with which she had hitherto observed the out-goings and in-comings at North Shingles, was now entirely transferred to her master. For the rest of that third day, she never let him out of her sight; she never allowed any third person who came to the house, on any pretence whatever, a minute's chance of private communication with him. At intervals, through the night, she stole to the door of his room, to listen and assure herself that he was in bed; and before sunrise the next morning, the coast-guard'sman going his rounds was surprised to see a lady who had risen as early as himself, engaged over her work at one of the upper windows of Sea View.

On the fourth morning, Mr. Noel Vanstone came down to breakfast, conscious of the mistake that he had committed on the previous day. The obvious course to take, for the purpose of gaining time, was to declare that his mind was still undecided. He made the assertion boldly, when the housekeeper asked him if he meant to move that day. Again, Mrs. Lecount offered no remark; and again the signs and tokens of incredulity showed themselves in her face. Vacillation of purpose was not at all unusual in her experience of her master. But, on this occasion, she believed that his caprice of conduct was assumed, for the purpose of gaining time to communicate with North Shingles; and she accordingly set her watch on him once more, with doubled and trebled vigilance.

No letters came that morning. Towards noon the weather changed for the worse, and all idea of walking out as usual was abandoned. Hour after hour, while her master sat in one of the parlours, Mrs. Lecount kept watch in the other—with the door into the passage open, and with a full view of North Shingles through the convenient side-window at which she had established herself. Not a sign that was suspicious appeared; not a sound that was suspicious caught her ear. As the evening closed in, her master's hesitation came to an end. He was disgusted with the

weather; he hated the place; he foresaw the annoyance of more meetings with Mr. Bygrave—and he was determined to go to St. Crux the first thing the next morning. Lecount could stay behind to pack up the curiosities, and settle with the tradespeople, and could follow him to the admiral's on the next day. The housekeeper was a little staggered by the tone and manner in which he gave these orders. He had, to her own certain knowledge, effected no communication of any sort with North Shingles—and yet he seemed determined to leave Aldborough at the earliest possible opportunity. For the first time she hesitated in her adherence to her own conclusions. She remembered that her master had complained of the Bygraves, before they returned to Aldborough; and she was conscious that her own incredulity had once already misled her, when the appearance of the travelling carriage at the door had proved even Mr. Bygrave himself to be as good as his word.

Still, Mrs. Lecount determined to act with unrelenting caution to the last. That night, when the doors were closed, she privately removed the keys from the door in front and the door at the back. She then softly opened her bedroom window, and sat down by it, with her bonnet and cloak on, to prevent her taking cold. Mr. Noel Vanstone's window was on the same side of the house as her own. If any one came in the dark to speak to him from the garden beneath, they would speak to his housekeeper as well. Prepared at all points to intercept every form of clandestine communication which stratagem could invent, Mrs. Lecount watched through the quiet night. When morning came, she stole down stairs before the servant was up, restored the keys to their places, and re-occupied her position in the parlour, until Mr. Noel Vanstone made his appearance at the breakfast-table. Had he altered his mind? No. He declined posting to the railway, on account of the expense; but he was as firm as ever in his resolution to go to St. Crux. He desired that an inside place might be secured for him in the early coach. Suspicious to the last, Mrs. Lecount sent the baker's man to take the place. He was a public servant, and Mr. Bygrave would not suspect him of performing a private errand.

The coach called at Sea View. Mrs. Lecount saw her master established in his place, and ascertained that the other three inside seats were already occupied by strangers. She inquired of the coachman if the outside places (all of which were not yet filled up) had their full complement of passengers also. The man replied in the affirmative. He had two gentlemen to call for in the town, and the others would take their places at the inn. Mrs. Lecount forthwith turned her steps towards the inn, and took up her position on the parade opposite, from a point of view which would enable her to see the last of the coach on its departure. In ten minutes more it rattled away, full outside and in; and the housekeeper's own eyes assured her that neither Mr.

Bygrave himself, nor any one belonging to North Shingles, was among the passengers.

There was only one more precaution to take, and Mrs. Lecount did not neglect it. Mr. Bygrave had doubtless seen the coach call at Sea View. He might hire a carriage and follow it to the railway, on pure speculation. Mrs. Lecount remained within view of the inn (the only place at which a carriage could be obtained) for nearly an hour longer, waiting for events. Nothing happened; no carriage made its appearance; no pursuit of Mr. Noel Vanstone was now within the range of human possibility. The long strain on Mrs. Lecount's mind relaxed at last. She left her seat on the parade, and returned, in higher spirits than usual, to perform the closing household ceremonies at Sea View.

She sat down alone in the parlour, and drew a long breath of relief. Captain Wragge's calculations had not deceived him. The evidence of her own senses had at last conquered the housekeeper's incredulity, and had literally forced her into the opposite extreme of belief.

Estimating the events of the last three days from her own experience of them; knowing (as she certainly knew) that the first idea of going to St. Crux had been started by herself, and that her master had found no opportunity and shown no inclination to inform the family at North Shingles that he had accepted her proposal—Mrs. Lecount was fairly compelled to acknowledge that not a fragment of foundation remained to justify the continued suspicion of treachery in her own mind. Looking at the succession of circumstances under the new light thrown on them by results, she could see nothing unaccountable—nothing contradictory anywhere. The attempt to pass off the forged pictures as originals, was in perfect harmony with the character of such a man as Mr. Bygrave. Her master's indignation at the attempt to impose on him; his plainly-expressed suspicion that Miss Bygrave was privy to it; his disappointment in the niece; his contemptuous treatment of the uncle on the parade; his weariness of the place which had been the scene of his rash intimacy with strangers, and his readiness to quit it that morning—all commended themselves as genuine realities to the housekeeper's mind, for one sufficient reason. Her own eyes had seen Mr. Noel Vanstone take his departure from Aldborough without leaving, or attempting to leave, a single trace behind him for the Bygraves to follow.

Thus far the housekeeper's conclusions led her—but no farther. She was too shrewd a woman to trust the future to chance and fortune. Her master's variable temper might relent. Accident might, at any time, give Mr. Bygrave an opportunity of repairing the error that he had committed, and of artfully regaining his lost place in Mr. Noel Vanstone's estimation. Admitting that circumstances had at last declared themselves unmistakably in her favour, Mrs. Lecount was not the less convinced that nothing would permanently assure her master's security for the

future, but the plain exposure of the conspiracy which she had striven to accomplish from the first—which she was resolved to accomplish still.

"I always enjoy myself at St. Crux," thought Mrs. Lecount, opening her account-books, and sorting the tradesmen's bills. "The admiral is a gentleman, the house is noble, the table is excellent. No matter! Here, in this house, I stay by myself, till I have seen the inside of Miss Bygrave's wardrobe."

She packed her master's collection of curiosities in their various cases, settled the claims of the tradespeople, and superintended the covering of the furniture in the course of the day. Towards nightfall she went out, bent on investigation; and ventured into the garden at North Shingles, under cover of the darkness. She saw the light in the parlour window, and the lights in the windows of the rooms up-stairs, as usual. After an instant's hesitation she stole to the house-door, and noiselessly tried the handle from the outside. It turned the lock as she had expected, from her experience of houses at Aldborough and at other watering-places—but the door resisted her; the door was distrustfully bolted on the inside. After making that discovery, she went round to the back of the house, and ascertained that the door on that side was secured in the same manner. "Bolt your doors, Mr. Bygrave, as fast as you like," said the housekeeper, stealing back again to the parade. "You can't bolt the entrance to your servant's pocket. The best lock you have, may be opened by a golden key."

She went back to bed. The ceaseless watching, the unrelaxing excitement of the last two days, had worn her out.

The next morning she rose at seven o'clock. In half an hour more she saw the punctual Mr. Bygrave—as she had seen him on many previous mornings, at the same time—issue from the gate of North Shingles, with his towels under his arm, and make his way to a boat that was waiting for him on the beach. Swimming was one among the many personal accomplishments of which the captain was master. He was rowed out to sea every morning, and took his bath luxuriously in the deep blue water. Mrs. Lecount had already computed the time consumed in this recreation by her watch; and had discovered that a full hour usually elapsed, from the moment when he embarked on the beach to the moment when he returned.

During that period, she had never seen any other inhabitant of North Shingles leave the house. The servant was no doubt at her work in the kitchen; Mrs. Bygrave was probably still in her bed; and Miss Bygrave (if she was up at that early hour) had perhaps received directions not to venture out in her uncle's absence. The difficulty of meeting the obstacle of Magdalen's presence in the house, had been, for some days past, the one difficulty which all Mrs. Lecount's ingenuity had thus far proved unable to overcome.

She sat at the window for a quarter of an hour

after the captain's boat had left the beach, with her mind hard at work, and her eyes fixed mechanically on North Shingles—she sat, considering what written excuse she could send to her master for delaying her departure from Aldborough for some days to come—when the door of the house she was watching suddenly opened; and Magdalen herself appeared in the garden. There was no mistaking her figure and her dress. She took a few steps hastily towards the gate; stopped, and pulled down the veil of her garden hat, as if she felt the clear morning light too much for her—then hurried out on the parade, and walked away northward, in such haste, or in such preoccupation of mind, that she went through the garden gate without closing it after her.

Mrs. Lecount started up from her chair, with a moment's doubt of the evidence of her own eyes. Had the opportunity which she had been vainly plotting to produce, actually offered itself to her, of its own accord? Had the chances declared themselves at last in her favour, after steadily acting against her for so long? There was no doubt of it: in the popular phrase, "her luck had turned." She snatched up her bonnet and mantilla; and made for North Shingles, without an instant's hesitation. Mr. Bygrave out at sea; Miss Bygrave away for a walk; Mrs. Bygrave and the servant both at home, and both easily dealt with—the opportunity was not to be lost; the risk was well worth running!

This time, the house-door was easily opened: no one had bolted it again, after Magdalen's departure. Mrs. Lecount closed the door softly; listened for a moment in the passage; and heard the servant noisily occupied in the kitchen with her pots and pans. "If my lucky star leads me straight into Miss Bygrave's room," thought the housekeeper, stealing noiselessly up the stairs, "I may find my way to her wardrobe without disturbing anybody."

She tried the door nearest to the front of the house, on the right-hand side of the landing. Capricious chance had deserted her already. The lock was turned. She tried the door opposite, on her left hand. The boots ranged symmetrically in a row, and the razors on the dressing-table, told her at once that she had not found the right room yet. She returned to the right hand side of the landing, walked down a little passage leading to the back of the house, and tried a third door. The door opened—and the two opposite extremes of female humanity, Mrs. Wragge and Mrs. Lecount, stood face to face in an instant!

"I beg ten thousand pardons!" said Mrs. Lecount, with the most consummate self-possession.

"Lord bless us and save us!" cried Mrs. Wragge, with the most helpless amazement.

The two exclamations were uttered in a moment; and, in that moment, Mrs. Lecount took the measure of her victim. Nothing of the least importance escaped her. She noticed the Oriental Cashmere Robe lying half made, and half unpicked again, on the table; she noticed the im-

becile foot of Mrs. Wragge searching blindly in the neighbourhood of her chair for a lost shoe; she noticed that there was a second door in the room besides the door by which she had entered, and a second chair within easy reach, on which she might do well to seat herself in a friendly and confidential way. "Pray don't resent my intrusion," pleaded Mrs. Lecount, taking the chair. "Pray allow me to explain myself!"

Speaking in her softest voice; surveying Mrs. Wragge with a sweet smile on her insinuating lips, and a melting interest in her handsome black eyes, the housekeeper told her little introductory series of falsehoods, with an artless truthfulness of manner which the Father of Lies himself might have envied. She had heard from Mr. Bygrave that Mrs. Bygrave was a great invalid; she had constantly reproached herself, in her idle half-hours at Sea View (where she filled the situation of Mr. Noel Vanstone's housekeeper), for not having offered her friendly services to Mrs. Bygrave; she had been directed by her master (doubtless well known to Mrs. Bygrave, as one of her husband's friends, and, naturally, one of her charming niece's admirers) to join him that day at the residence to which he had removed from Aldborough; she was obliged to leave early, but she could not reconcile it to her conscience to go without calling to apologise for her apparent want of neighbourly consideration; she had found nobody in the house, she had not been able to make the servant hear, she had presumed (not discovering that apartment down stairs) that Mrs. Bygrave's boudoir might be on the upper story; she had thoughtlessly committed an intrusion of which she was sincerely ashamed, and she could now only trust to Mrs. Bygrave's indulgence to excuse and forgive her.

A less elaborate apology might have served Mrs. Lecount's purpose. As soon as Mrs. Wragge's struggling perceptions had grasped the fact that her unexpected visitor was a neighbour, well known to her by repute, her whole being became absorbed in admiration of Mrs. Lecount's lady-like manners, and Mrs. Lecount's perfectly-fitting gown! "What a noble way she has of talking!" thought poor Mrs. Wragge, as the housekeeper reached her closing sentence. "And, oh my heart alive, how nicely she's dressed!"

"I see I disturb you," pursued Mrs. Lecount, artfully availing herself of the Oriental Cashmere Robe, as a means ready at hand of reaching the end she had in view—"I see I disturb you, ma'am, over an occupation which, I know by experience, requires the closest attention. Dear, dear me, you are unpicking the dress again, I see, after it has been made! This is my own experience again, Mrs. Bygrave. Some dresses are so obstinate! Some dresses seem to say to one, in so many words, 'No! you may do what you like with me; I won't fit!'"

Mrs. Wragge was greatly struck by this happy remark. She burst out laughing, and clapped her great hands in the highest excitement.

"That's what this gown has been saying to me,

ever since I first put the scissors into it," she exclaimed, cheerfully. "I know I've got an awful big back—but that's no reason. Why should a gown be weeks on hand, and then not meet behind you after all? It hangs over my Boasom like a sack—it does. Look here, ma'am, at the skirt. It won't come right. It draggles in front, and cocks up behind. It shows my heels—and, Lord knows, I get into scrapes enough about my heels, without showing them into the bargain!"

"May I ask a favour?" inquired Mrs. Lecount, confidentially. "May I try, Mrs. Bygrave, if I can make my experience of any use to you? I think our bosoms, ma'am, are our great difficulty. Now, this bosom of yours?—Shall I say in plain words what I think? This bosom of yours is an Enormous Mistake!"

"Don't say that!" cried Mrs. Wragge, imploringly. "Don't, please, there's a good soul! It's a deal bigger, I know; but its modelled, for all that, from one of Magdalen's own."

She was far too deeply interested on the subject of the dress to notice that she had forgotten herself already, and that she had referred to Magdalen by her own name. Mrs. Lecount's sharp ears detected the mistake the instant it was committed. "So! so!" she thought. "One discovery already. If I had ever doubted my own suspicions, here is an estimable lady who would now have set me right.—I beg your pardon," she proceeded, aloud, "did you say this was modelled from one of your niece's dresses?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Wragge. "It's as like as two peas."

"Then," replied Mrs. Lecount, adroitly, "there must be some serious mistake in the making of your niece's dress. Can you show it to me?"

"Bless your heart—yes!" cried Mrs. Wragge. "Step this way, ma'am; and bring the gown along with you, please. It keeps sliding off, out of pure aggravation, if you lay it out on the table. There's lots of room on the bed in here."

She opened the door of communication, and led the way eagerly into Magdalen's room. As Mrs. Lecount followed, she stole a look at her watch. Never before had time flown as it flew that morning! In twenty minutes more, Mr. Bygrave would be back from his bath.

"There!" said Mrs. Wragge, throwing open the wardrobe, and taking a dress down from one of the pegs. "Look there! There's plaits on her Boasom, and plaits on mine. Six of one, and half a dozen of the other; and mine are the biggest—that's all!"

Mrs. Lecount shook her head gravely, and entered forthwith into subtleties of disquisition on the art of dressmaking, which had the desired effect of utterly bewildering the proprietor of the Oriental Cashmere Robe, in less than three minutes.

"Don't!" cried Mrs. Wragge, imploringly. "Don't go on like that! I'm miles behind you; and my head's Buzzing already. Tell us, like a

good soul, what's to be done. You said something about the pattern just now. Perhaps I'm too big for the pattern? I can't help it, if I am. Many's the good cry I had, when I was a growing girl, over my own size! There's half too much of me, ma'am—measure me along or measure me across, I don't deny it—there's half too much of me, any way."

"My dear madam," protested Mrs. Lecount, "you do yourself a wrong! Permit me to assure you that you possess a commanding figure—a figure of Minerva. A majestic simplicity in the form of a woman, imperatively demands a majestic simplicity in the form of that woman's dress. The laws of costume are classical; the laws of costume must not be trifled with! Plaits for Venus—puffs for Juno—folds for Minerva. I venture to suggest a total change of pattern. Your niece has other dresses in her collection. Why may we not find a Minerva pattern among them?"

As she said those words, she led the way back to the wardrobe.

Mrs. Wragge followed, and took the dresses out, one by one, shaking her head despondently. Silk dresses appeared, muslin dresses appeared. The one dress which remained invisible, was the dress of which Mrs. Lecount was in search.

"There's the lot of 'em," said Mrs. Wragge. "They may do for Venus and the two other Ones (I've seen 'em in picters without a morsel of decent linen among the three)—but they won't do for Me."

"Surely there is another dress left?" said Mrs. Lecount, pointing to the wardrobe, but touching nothing in it. "Surely I see something hanging in the corner, behind that dark shawl?"

Mrs. Wragge removed the shawl; Mrs. Lecount opened the door of the wardrobe a little wider. There—hitched carelessly on the innermost peg—there, with its white spots, and its double flounce, was the brown Alpaca dress!

The suddenness and completeness of the discovery threw the housekeeper, practised dissembler as she was, completely off her guard. She started at the sight of the dress. The instant afterwards, her eyes turned uneasily towards Mrs. Wragge. Had the start been observed? It had passed entirely unnoticed. Mrs. Wragge's whole attention was fixed on the Alpaca dress: she was staring at it incomprehensibly, with an expression of the utmost dismay.

"You seem alarmed, ma'am," said Mrs. Lecount. "What is there in the wardrobe to frighten you?"

"I'd have given a crown-piece out of my pocket," said Mrs. Wragge, "not to have set eyes on that gown. It had gone clean out of my head—and now its come back again. Cover it up!" cried Mrs. Wragge, throwing the shawl over the dress in a sudden fit of desperation. "If I look at it much longer, I shall think I'm back again in Vauxhall Walk!"

Vauxhall Walk! Those two words told Mrs. Lecount she was on the brink of another disco-

very. She stole a second look at her watch. There was barely ten minutes to spare before the time when Mr. Bygrave might return; there was not one of those ten minutes which might not bring his niece back to the house. Caution counselled Mrs. Lecount to go, without running any more risks. Curiosity rooted her to the spot, and gave her the courage to stay at all hazards until the time was up. Her amiable smile began to harden a little, as she probed her way tenderly into Mrs. Wragge's feeble mind.

"You have some unpleasant remembrances of Vauxhall Walk?" she said, with the gentlest possible tone of inquiry in her voice. "Or, perhaps, I should say, unpleasant remembrances of that dress belonging to your niece?"

"The last time I saw her with that gown on," said Mrs. Wragge dropping into a chair and beginning to tremble, "was the time when I came back from shopping, and saw the Ghost."

"The Ghost?" repeated Mrs. Lecount, clasping her hands in graceful astonishment. "Dear madam, pardon me! Is there such a thing in the world? Where did you see it? In Vauxhall Walk? Tell me—you are the first lady I have ever met with who has seen a Ghost—pray tell me!"

Flattered by the position of importance which she had suddenly assumed in the housekeeper's eyes, Mrs. Wragge entered at full length into the narrative of her supernatural adventure. The breathless eagerness with which Mrs. Lecount listened to her description of the spectre's costume, the spectre's hurry on the stairs, and the spectre's disappearance in the bedroom; the extraordinary interest which Mrs. Lecount displayed on hearing that the dress in the wardrobe was the very dress in which Magdalen happened to be attired, at the awful moment when the ghost vanished—encouraged Mrs. Wragge to wade deeper and deeper into details, and to involve herself in a confusion of collateral circumstances, out of which there seemed to be no prospect of her emerging for hours to come. Faster and faster the inexorable minutes flew by; nearer and nearer came the fatal moment of Mr. Bygrave's return. Mrs. Lecount looked at her watch for the third time, without an attempt, on this occasion, to conceal the action from her companion's notice. There were literally two minutes left for her to get clear of North Shingles. Two minutes would be enough, if no accident happened. She had discovered the Alpaca dress; she had heard the whole story of the adventure in Vauxhall Walk; and, more than that, she had even informed herself of the number of the house—which Mrs. Wragge happened to remember, because it answered to the number of years in her own age. All that was necessary to her master's complete enlightenment, she had now accomplished. Even if there had been time to stay longer, there was nothing worth staying for. "I'll strike this worthy idiot dumb with a *coup d'état*," thought the housekeeper, "and vanish before she recovers herself."

"Horrible!" cried Mrs. Lecount, interrupting the ghostly narrative by a shrill little scream, and making for the door, to Mrs. Wragge's unutterable astonishment, without the least ceremony. "You freeze the very marrow of my bones. Good morning!" She coolly tossed the Oriental Cashmere Robe into Mrs. Wragge's expansive lap, and left the room in an instant.

As she swiftly descended the stairs, she heard the door of the bedroom open.

"Where are your manners?" cried a voice from above, hailing her feebly over the banisters. "What do you mean by pitching my gown at me, in that way? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!" pursued Mrs. Wragge, turning from a lamb to a lioness, as she gradually realised the indignity offered to the Cashmere Robe. "You nasty foreigner, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

Pursued by this valedictory address, Mrs. Lecount reached the house-door, and opened it without interruption. She glided rapidly along the garden path; passed through the gate; and finding herself safe on the parade, stopped, and looked towards the sea.

The first object which her eyes encountered, was the figure of Mr. Bygrave, standing motionless on the beach—a petrified bather, with his towels in his hand! One glance at him was enough to show that he had seen the housekeeper passing out through his garden gate.

Rightly conjecturing that Mr. Bygrave's first impulse would lead him to make instant inquiries in his own house, Mrs. Lecount pursued her way back to Sea View as composedly as if nothing had happened. When she entered the parlour where her solitary breakfast was waiting for her, she was surprised to see a letter lying on the table. She approached to take it up, with an expression of impatience, thinking it might be some tradesman's bill which she had forgotten.

It was the forged letter from Zurich.

RUSSIAN TRAVEL.

COTTON.

ANOTHER topic is suggested by the question of dress. Every Russian peasant, male and female, wears cotton clothes. The men wear printed shirts and trousers, and the women are dressed from head to foot in printed cotton also. When it is remembered that Russia contains something like thirty-three million of serfs, besides other classes amounting to twenty millions, all using this article more or less, one can estimate the demand for cotton goods. But a calculation is not to be made from data afforded by free and more prosperous countries. The peasantry are poor, the cotton prints are dear. Hence there is not a tithe of the right amount of consumption. Still the cotton trade in Russia is a large trade, and it is supplied chiefly by native labour in mills—containing machinery made in Oldham and Manchester, and superintended by Englishmen from the same and neighbouring towns.

There may be five or six millions of spindles at work spinning this cotton. Together with the weaving and printing of the same, that forms, indeed, a large item, perhaps the largest, among the manufacturing processes of Russia, and employs a capital of thirty millions sterling. The largest mills are in the neighbourhood of St. Petersburg, one of these having some hundred and twenty thousand spindles, and a few others are of seventy thousand and sixty thousand, but the great bulk of the trade is in the Moscow district, and scattered about the land in that direction. The number of spindles there may not be so great in any individual mill as in some of the large Petersburg establishments, but the mills are more numerous, some of them nearly as large, and all of them are of respectable dimensions, even according to an English estimate.

The chief causes producing this large manufacturing trade are, of course, the great demand and a high protective tariff, which excludes the cottons of England from the Russian market. England and Englishmen have derived the chief benefit from it notwithstanding. The mills are all filled, as I have said, with English-made machinery; a good deal of English capital is invested in them, and they are almost universally managed by English skilled workmen at high wages.

It is a notorious fact that although cotton-spinning has been in operation in Russia for upwards of fifty years, and constantly on the increase, the people necessarily becoming practically acquainted with all its details, still they cannot dispense with English superintendence. Wherever native superintendence has been tried it has failed. And it will always be so, notwithstanding the admitted abilities of the Russians as workmen, until a moral and intellectual training as freemen gives them confidence in their own powers, secured to them to induce exertion and competition in skill with their opponents of more favoured lands. But, account for it as we may, it is a disgrace to all concerned that no works requiring the least practical care, and the commonest skill in superintendence, can yet be carried on successfully without the help of highly-paid foreigners. What should we say of ourselves in England if a stranger could point to all the cotton mills in Lancashire, all the flax mills of Leeds, Dundee, and Ireland, and all the iron and engineering shops of Glasgow, London, and Liverpool, and say these were all managed and superintended by foreign skill, that the English employed in them were mere labourers and unskilled workmen under the dictation of strangers who could scarcely speak the language of the country? If to this were added the knowledge that the people of England had to pay two or three prices for the cotton goods, because of a high duty and other fiscal restrictions, preventing imports at half the price, and that all this only served to make a few rich men richer, while the poor people who wore the cotton had to pay the entire cost of all the foreign cotton wool, foreign machinery, foreign

agents, and foreign skill, without themselves deriving any sort of material or moral benefit, England could not long tolerate so great a blunder. This, however, is the state of things in Russia. Several great fortunes have been made by machine-makers and capitalists, and very nice pickings have been obtained by agents and superintendents, many of whom went to Russia poor and left it rich. But that it has benefited the Russian people, or in any way whatever added to their comfort or improvement, I do not believe. The poor baron has received more "abrok" from his serfs employed at these places, because they got better wages and paid him accordingly, and this has enabled him to live in ease and frivolity without working his lands. The free people, and the serfs under easy and rich masters, have had more money to drink, they have forgotten their patriarchal simplicity and virtues, if they ever had any, and have learnt all the low vices and drunken habits engendered wherever masses of both sexes of ignorant and debased people mix together—as is the case in mills and factories in Russia—without law, religion, or morality to guide them.

In the interior of the country a considerable number of these "fabrics" as they are called, are the grossest sinks of immorality, tyranny, and wickedness. But there are a few both in Moscow and Petersburg under management, so far as interior arrangements are concerned, that fully equals that of the best regulated establishments in England. In St. Petersburg particularly, there are the Kolinkingin Bridge Works, that might challenge competition with any mill in existence.

The father of Russian cotton and flax-spinning and other manufactures was General Wilson. This gentleman is mentioned by Dr. Clarke in his travels in Russia as a prominent character, and as one who had even then effected great things, and he occupied an exalted position at the time of the doctor's visit. The writer of these notes knew General Wilson for many years, and enjoyed his hospitality, advice, and friendship on many occasions. A few lines he thinks due to one of the worthiest helpers in good work ever possessed by the Russian Czars, especially since the main facts can be given as they came straight from himself.

General Wilson left Scotland in the ninth year of his age, after having gone through a course of study at the High School of Edinburgh, to which city his parents belonged. He was the son of an ingenious blacksmith, where also his grandfather had lived as the "King's smith," at the old Mint in the Canongate. His parents went to Russia during the reign of the Empress Catherine, who, whatever her faults in other respects, never failed to encourage foreigners of merit who would settle in her dominions. In Russia the young Wilson grew and exhibited talents of no ordinary kind, which soon attracted the notice of General Gascoigne, who had some time before been brought from the Carron Iron Works to instruct the Russians in the art of casting cannon.

Appointed interpreter and secretary to this general, Wilson passed rapidly through various grades and ranks, until he became his assistant in the Imperial Establishment of Engineering at Colpino. When Gascoigne died, he succeeded him in the imperial direction of those immense works, from which a great portion of the armament of the Russian navy has been supplied. He also became, under Marie Feodorovna (the Emperor Paul's wife), the originator and superintendent of the Foundling Hospital, and of the large flax and cotton manufactory at Alexandroffsky, each the first institution of its kind in Russia. Here, amidst inconceivable difficulties, and in the face of prejudice and opposition before which most men would have quailed, did this persevering Scotchman lay the foundation of that manufacturing enterprise by which Russia is either to gain or lose. He has enjoyed the esteem and respect of the successive sovereigns whom he has served, and from each of whom he has received abundant and tangible proofs of confidence in the highest of those ranks and orders which the law of Russia affords to a foreigner. After having been in the imperial service for nearly eighty years, and in supreme command for sixty-eight, he is now, at the age of ninety, laid on the shelf, and lives in retirement on an ample pension from the present emperor.

Not only did General Wilson originate and carry out the imperial manufactories, which at the outset were designed for models, but he was the mainspring of many private industrial enterprises which have since grown to huge dimensions. He was the first man among four who started the monster Kolinkingin Cotton Works, and is at the present time chairman of their board of directors. Another, and now a larger establishment, owes its existence chiefly to the name and influence of General Wilson—namely, that belonging to Messrs. Steiglitz and Craig. The most admirable feature in General Wilson's whole career has been his incorruptibility in the midst of the notorious dishonesty of Russian functionaries. He has been pointed out as the man who never took and never offered a bribe, and though rich, is not enormously so, as he no doubt might have been had he acted differently. Unmarried and a bachelor, he has devoted much of his later years to his books, his library being one of the best in Russia. He is now nearly blind, but his appetite for information is still as strong as ever, and he pays a young man of good education to read for him every day.

A friend supplies me with notes of his own experience to the following effect: I was in 18— chief engineer at the large cotton works at C—, a day's journey from a chief city in Russia. The managing partner on the spot employed two assistants (English), carder and spinner, also a sub-director under himself. The sub-director was a man of some education and considerable general knowledge, and had at one time possessed a mill of his own, but from some cause had been unfortunate, and was now obliged to

serve a man in every respect his inferior. The chief man was ignorant, low-bred, tyrannical, and exacting; as bad a specimen nearly as his country could furnish; but he was master over this work, employed from eight hundred to one thousand hands, and being in the interior—irresponsible and unchecked by any kind of popular observation—he gave free play to his unbridled temper and his greed.

The mill went night and day—"sootkie"—the workpeople were hired principally from the steward, some were paid wages, and found themselves, others were paid nothing, but were fed, the chief paying the steward a stipulated sum per soul per annum—from thirty shillings to not quite five pounds. These people were driven to work in gangs or shifts, by the overseer and his men over hundreds and over tens; and the scenes of cruelty and inhumanity which were constantly occurring were exceedingly execrable to my feelings. My windows faced the mill-yard, and my study-window looked into the whipping-court of the stanavoy's house. Few days passed but some of the poor creatures were led there to receive punishment. If the chief was ignorant and low-bred he was a splendid slave-driver and detective. He was in the habit of bouncing into the mill at all unlikely hours of night or day, and then woe to the skulkers, or any one he imagined to be in a fault; he could swear eloquently in Russ or English, and his English assistants sometimes received a volley of abuse. He durst not carry a "cat"—that is against rule in Russia—the thrashing must be done legally and officially; but he seldom left the works without carrying a list of names; this list, accompanied by a note to his friend the "stan," securing the owners of the names a certain portion of the "stick." I have from my observatory seen married women, pregnant women, girls, boys, and men grey-haired, tied down on a board in that court, their clothes indecently torn up, and the rods applied by a man on each side for faults of the most trifling character. I have remonstrated with him, but was told, "No stick, no work." Certainly this man fully believed and acted on that Russian saying.

One day I met the starosta leading four women through the yard.

"Tell me, Evan Evanovige, what are you going to do with these?"

He handed me a paper, and I read—"Give these four (here followed the names) thirty blows each," signed by the director.

This did not surprise me; but it may surprise my readers that a magistrate would, without any trial or investigation—without even knowing the faults for which these people were sent, execute an order of this character.

"Mother," I said to one of the women, "what have you done to deserve this?"

"God knows; the master found me asleep."

"And what have you done?" I said to another.

"I was suckling my little one, and my machine was standing."

"And you?" to a young woman.

"Oh, he knows very well I am not in fault; but I would not go into his small room last night with him."

"Have you been there before with him?"

"Oh yes, he takes any of us; he is a pig. I won't go any more, for I am to be married next week."

"And what is your fault?" I said to the fourth, an old withered hag.

"It was nothing. I only took a little yarn, only a little to knit with, you know. What's to be done?"

For faults such as these the poor creatures were thrashed, by order of a foreigner, who for a few roubles to the needy stanavoy could, without judge or jury, get all the hands in his mill lashed and beaten, to suit his caprice or administer to his amusement, at any time.

It is not creditable to Englishmen that men such as this are to be found among them. But there have been and are found occasionally men who would revive in Russia greater evils ten times than any ever experienced under the old extinct factory system of their own country. Such men are ignorant, to begin with. They possess no fixed principles to go on with; and when they find themselves amongst a degraded people, and in nearly an irresponsible position of authority, they finish by being heartless tyrants. I have known some of them who could scarcely read or write. One of them, who went to Russia fifteen years ago to be a director of a cotton-mill, had to make his + to documents; another sent the following characteristic order to a friend of mine, which I shall copy verbatim:

Maester Broon,—Ave you any pices of 3 Karter piope, has we wants em to tpisnik to meend testome piope the Mugiks as you cent av al bin ont spree frou Munday, cend the piope and cend the plates has wur ordered bee th' mon as wur cent on tussy so no more at preasante from your umble cert.

GORG. —

Such men, though deplorably ignorant in everything else, generally possess a good practical knowledge of their trade, and a powerful amount of self-assertion. They have been overlookers, spinners, or carders in some well-regulated work in England, under an educated director, and might have remained decent worthy men in their own sphere, at wages varying from 20s. to 30s. per week. To such people appointments in Russia as head men, at 4*l.*, 5*l.*, or 6*l.* per week, suggest a Dorado—a great spring from the pipe and glass of ale in a taproom to cigars and brandy in an hotel. From very little men they swell into very great men. Their wives commence at thirty or forty years of age to learn to be "leddies," as one of them told me herself, whom I found one day, shortly after her arrival, buying rings, brooches, gold watch and chain: "Maister says I mun learn to be a leddy noo." And while she is undergoing this expensive change, "Maister" is learning to

be a tyrant, and perhaps a drunkard. He kicks "Jacky" about, as he styles the Russians, in grand style—speaks of them and to them as to brutes.

But "Jacky" sometimes makes reprisals. He will watch like a cunning wolf on a dark night, and with a brickbat or lump of iron fell his tyrant to the earth by a blow on the back of his head. This is of rare occurrence, but it has happened of late on several occasions.

The same day on which my friend saw the four women going to be beaten he met the sub-superintendent, and mentioned the circumstance.

"Yes," he said, "the master takes the tyrannical way. I cannot prevent it, and do not intend to remain much longer to witness it."

"Do you never order any of them to be beaten?"

"No, never. The stick is not so powerful in Russia as it once was. And even on the score of policy it is better to avoid it, especially for a foreigner. I have studied the Russians a little since I came among them, and though they are sly, slothful, and the greatest of thieves, I do not think they are so far removed from the common feeling of our nature as to be altogether unsusceptible to kind and just dealings. They have little gratitude—in fact, I do not think they know what it means. Still I can manage them better, ay, and get more work out of them, too, by being cool and just, and, above all, merciful. But this country is a bad school for an unruly temper."

"Do you never find signs of rebellion or insubordination amongst them?"

"Not till lately. Since this talk of emancipation, I think I can see a sort of mutual intelligence amongst them, which must spring from hope, and perhaps secret meetings and talk. Still, I do not think them malicious; they seem easy to forget and forgive. Yet," he said, after a pause, "God knows, I should not wish to be the object of their hate; if once their passions broke loose, they would be demons, not men."

Poor man! these were the last words my friend ever heard from him; and that was the last time he saw him in life.

That very night a part of the mill took fire, whether by accident or design no one could or would tell. It was observed in time, and the superintendent, with his two English assistants and a few others, exerted themselves to put it out. The director and the "stan" were carousing in the director's house—a very frequent occurrence; but when the alarm was given both hurried to the scene of the fire.

Now, you know that, in Russia, the police enjoy the peculiar and exclusive privilege of putting out fires, and they take the lead in all the operations. Perhaps that is the reason why fires here never are put out, but are allowed to burn themselves out; in order to facilitate which process all the doors are unlocked or broken

open, all the windows smashed, and the roofs are, if possible, torn off. All this gives a noble draught to the flame, there is no want of bustle, and in the cities generals in uniform hurry about giving all kinds of orders; fellows in grey, with brass helmets, knock against one another, and run their engines into all manner of ridiculous places. There is plenty of daring climbing and pouring of water, but somehow it all ends, as I have said, in the place burning until there is no more to burn. On the present occasion the sub-director determined on another method, and, taking the matter in his own hands, he locked the doors of the place on fire—it was the boiler-house—to prevent any draught of wind fanning the rising flames, and threw water on the burning timbers, while the mill-engine was kept going, to pump the water. They were succeeding very fast in getting the fire under, when the police, in the form of the drunken "stan," demanded entrance, and the door was assailed from without.

"On your life, Andrea, don't open the door yet. It will be all out in a few minutes if the door's kept shut."

And the superintendent, after issuing this order to the man stationed at the door, hastened thither himself, to prevent, if possible, what he so much dreaded. But before he could accomplish his purpose, the man, at the sound of the dreaded "stan," had turned the lock, and his highness was pushing himself through the opening door, while the director with a lot of "stan's" officials were pressing on behind. The sub saw there was only one way to save the mill. He heard his men crying, "For Heaven's sake keep that door shut. It's blazing up again." He was a powerful man, and could have thrashed ten "stans" into jelly, so he laid hold of the official, words having no effect, hurled him back among his satellites, shut and locked the door, and stood sentry over it himself, until the fire was completely extinguished and the danger past.

The rest is soon told. On opening the door, he was arrested by the "stan," in the name of the law, for laying hands on him in the execution of his duty. The half-drunken director offered no effectual remonstrance. My friend had left the village and did not return till next day; and so, in a bitterly cold frosty night, this man, who had saved a large mill from becoming a heap of ashes, was dragged, his clothes saturated with water, to the filthy lock-up, and kept all night. In the morning he was liberated; in the evening he was attacked by inflammation, then came brain fever, then death in due time. Few recover here from diseases.

If this narrative should chance to be read by the man who could have saved the brave fellow that night and did not, may the remembrance burn into his heart and mend his future ways. This noble fellow died in a foreign land, and was buried among strangers; his place at home was empty; his wife is a widow, his children are orphans. But the other lives; rich, prosperous, and, I suppose, happy, enjoying the

abundant fruits of a life spent as I have tried to describe amongst the Russians. Such men are, however, the scarce exceptions, not the rule, among the English men of business in Russia.

SMALL-BEER CHRONICLES.

It is the custom of Registrars-General and other Strong-Ale-Chroniclers to make certain occasional comments on the Births, Deaths, and Marriages which it comes within their province to record. I am far from wishing to depart from this ancient and useful custom, and shall only differ from some of my predecessors and contemporaries in the order in which I propose to treat of these three subjects. I consider that the old proprietors and holders of office should be dealt with first, and that we should not have anything to say to their successors, the young heirs, till we have made certain comments on their neglected predecessors. I shall begin, then, contrary to custom, with the Deaths, and get to the Births and Marriages afterwards. Entering, then, at once upon this part of my duty, let me commence by announcing, in form, the death of THE DOOR-KNOCKER.

As this old and respectable institution is likely very soon to be forgotten, it seems desirable to say a few words as to its leading characteristics, for the benefit of future ages. It is not right to bury old customs without a word of funeral oration. When a long-entertained guest departs, you should see him courteously to the door and off the premises, not turn your back upon him and let him slink away unobserved.

It is possible that the days when Corinthian Tom and Jerry the unprincipled held it as a fixed idea that to sally forth at midnight and wrench off the door-knockers of the lieges was pastime admirably adapted to young men of condition—it is possible, I say, that this same wrench may have given a shake to the constitution of the door-knocker from which it never recovered. It may be, also, that Creation generally arrived at the conclusion that an engine whose use was to attract the attention of persons dwelling in the lower stories of houses, scarcely fulfilled its purpose by deafening the inhabitants of the upper regions, and making them shake in their shoes, while it left those for whose benefit its clamour was meant so completely undisturbed that they were obliged to have their attention called to the knock at the door by the ringing of a bell.

Knockers may be classified under two heads: the matter-of-fact and the fanciful. The matter-of-fact knocker was simply what it professed to be—a piece of heavy metal, attached by a sort of hinge, to a street-door, with a plate for banging purposes between it and the wood-work of the door. The metal would be sometimes of bronze, sometimes—but very rarely—of brass, oftenest of iron, of a blackened description. The instrument would vary in size, in weight, and in mode of decoration. This was the matter-of-fact

knocker. Now for the fanciful. A lion's head would sometimes be brought into play in the construction of a fanciful knocker. I call it a lion's head by courtesy, but it must be owned that the resemblance to the king of beasts presented by the head in question was somewhat of the remote order, the eye having generally a somewhat human cast, and the upper lip being terribly swollen, in consequence of the machinery which connected the handle of the knocker with the teeth of the animal being rather a large mouthful. Sphinxes were pressed into the service of the knocker fanciful, and also the heads of aged men of two classes—a frowning old man who was sorry to see you when you called, and an old man bursting with glee, but rather, it must be confessed, of a malicious sort, as if he knew of some tremendous "sell" that was in store for you when you got inside the house, and was enjoying the joke prodigiously. The last knocker was very disconcerting. So was the hand holding a heavy ring-shaped knocker: for the simple reason that the hand had so tight a grasp, that the instrument worked stiffly. I may mention here that some persons of a severe and pitiless frame of mind were in the habit of fastening down their knockers with a staple, so that you could only lift them a very little way, and consequently could administer but a very gentle rap. This was disappointing, and the custom of so crippling the knocker was confined entirely to churlish and gloomy individuals. There were, again, those who had a bell-wire attached to their knockers, so that a knock and a ring were combined in one action, and a very stiff and crabbed action it was. And I may further add that because the knocker alarmed—as has been said above—everybody in the house, except the servants, it was the custom with some cautious persons to place beneath the instrument a brass plate with the words "and ring," or "ring also," inscribed upon it. I wish I could say that the word "please" was also used on these occasions; but truth must be the leading characteristic of these reports, and such was not the case.

The deceased door-knocker had its good and bad qualities like other things. One got to know the knocks of certain old friends and habitués of the house, and the well-known sound was often very welcome. A bell tells no tales of individuality. In like manner the bore had his knock, and one could fly by the back door, or hide, between the time when he rapped and the moment when the door was opened. The bell gives no such warning. The single knock of the creditor or the dependent, and the smart crash of the postman, again, told their tale plainly enough. And the mention of that last knock, by-the-by, brings us to a consideration of the troubles connected with the knocker. What a thing it was to be accidentally passing through the hall or actually approaching the door when the postman arrived! To say your heart came into your mouth at such moments is no sort of exaggeration, and I should think that,

except the pain, it gave one as near a notion of the sensation of being shot as could be attained without actually going through the process itself.

As to the indications of character which were to be got out of this deceased institution they were as endless as they were infallible. All other tests failing, here was one that could always be relied on. Let a man conceal his character as carefully as he would, it came out on the door-step. I have known people, apparently the meekest of the meek and the gentlest of the gentle, and who had the credit of being so in society, to expose themselves by a sharp and fierce manner of knocking at one's door, and I have never failed—having had my suspicions thus aroused—to observe that under trying circumstances ferocious traits of character have come out in such persons.

Here, then, at the very entrance to our domestic establishment the visitor proclaimed himself for what he was. How desirable this was. You might sit in your secret lair, the dining-room, and form your opinion on the character of your friend with perfect confidence, knowing that the knocker-test would not fail. Here, for instance, was Younghusband coming to look after your daughter. It was natural you should want to know all about him. "Rat, tat, tatity, tatity." Away with him, the match must be broken off, a man with such feebleness of character as that will never do. "Tat, tat-tat-tat-TAT." The passionate villain, he would break the poor girl's heart in a fortnight. Bubbler again had spoken to you about a certain investment, and had described in glowing colours the certainty of its success, and enlarged on the splendour of your prospects if you went into it. He comes to talk the matter over for the last time. "Ra, tatara, tatara, tatara, tatara, tat, tat, tat." The shallow impostor! The sanguine deceiver of himself and everybody else! If you do not button up your pockets after that knock, you deserve anything you get.

The irritable man, the obstinate man, the undecided man, the boastful man, all revealed themselves as soon as they touched the knocker; and so did the truthful, the amiable, the firm. It required, however, great penetration and experience to distinguish some of the finer shades of character. It was not easy, for instance, to determine to a rap where firmness ended and obstinacy began, or to separate amiability from feebleness. Still it was to be done.

The footman's knock must be given for the benefit of antiquarians before we leave this subject. What a terrible infliction that used to be! In future ages it will hardly be credited that a time, called civilised, existed, when one of a pair of giants, with white powder on their heads, used to descend from the back of a carriage, and seizing a piece of heavy metal, used to perform the following tune upon one's house door. RAP, RAP, RAP—Rat a tittity, tittity, tittity, tittity, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, tat, TAT. Yet it was so. The melody ran as above to a note. There was never more, never less. And I

consider it a very important thing, and quite worthy of a Small-Beer Chronicler, to leave on record for future generations this exact statement of the manners and customs of a period already nearly obsolete.

I have recorded what, it is hoped, will be useful to antiquarians who, ages hence, shall dig up a knocker among the ruins of Bloomsbury, and ask themselves, or write pamphlets to ask other people, what on earth it was used for? To silence one form of speculation, by-the-by, which these wisacres might otherwise have gone into very deeply, I beg to state plainly and authoritatively that this instrument was in no way connected with the practice of spirit-rapping.

I have now registered the death of the door-knocker. It is all over with it. The knocker manufactory can exist no longer. The new houses that spring up in new neighbourhoods, are knockerless, and the new generation of iron-workers would not know how to set about the construction of one of these instruments even if such a thing were wanted. The saying, "Dead as a door-nail," is still in existence, but now and henceforth let it be, "Dead as a door-knocker."

And among those who were wont to handle this defunct piece of machinery have we no deaths to record. There are classes of the human species that die out and become extinct, just as do the customs which distinguished them. I speak not of the Red Indian. I am not going to write an Elegy on the Last of the Mohicans. I have to record the death of the old-fashioned GENTLEMAN. He has a successor of whom I shall have something to say, when dealing with the Births, but the gentleman of the old school is gone from among us.

A figure, tall and upright, clad in a square-cut blue coat with metal buttons, and wearing a buff waistcoat, grey trousers tight at the ankle, gaiters, shoes, and a loose white neck-cloth, rises before me. He had been something of a dandy in his younger days, in the time when buckskins and tops were the thing, and I dare say remnants of such costume existed still in his wardrobe up-stairs, in company with a crush chapeau de bras, on an upper shelf, and half a dozen under waistcoats of various colours. He was a great farmer, but a deadly enemy to steam agriculture. An early riser, and keen sportsman, he regarded the battue system with horror, and held the selling of game in mortal aversion. He was a great favourite with the poor people in the village, for every one of whom he had a jolly word when he met them. He enjoyed a glass of wine after dinner, and had many a good story to tell over it of practical jokes and obsolete achievements which took place when "he was quartered with the depôt of the —th in Ireland." He would now and then season his conversation with a monosyllable beginning with a *d*, which would cause him to be promptly hushed by his relatives of the new generation. Withal, he was a gentleman every inch, and he is dead.

I have also to announce the death of another gentleman, of the old school also, but somewhat of a different type from the first. This was the man of cultivated leisure, the scholar, the classic. He had travelled in early life a good deal, had studied the works of the masters in the Italian galleries, had brought back copies of them to England, and with them had enriched a collection of spurious old pictures, which he had inherited, and in which he devoutly believed. His villa at Twickenham was in the classic style, and old marble tombs with Latin inscriptions on them, imported from Rome at an immense expense, were let into the walls of his Italian garden. The tombs of his dogs were about the grounds, and these, too, had Latin inscriptions upon them. "In memoriam Lindæ, mortuæ, Eheu!" &c. He liked to surround his table with professors of the arts and letters, but of the steady-going class, none of your wild geniuses with their new-fangled notions who would smile incredulously at his Guido, or who cared nothing for his old copy of Vitruvius. Worthy and orthodox believers in the past were the men for him; professors who knew the difference between an edition from Leyden and one from Amsterdam, ancient academicians who could go through the whole of his collection of drawings without a yawn.

Both these gentlemen, though with many points of difference between them, had certain things in common. They both abhorred beards. They were both conservatives and enemies to much progress. They were both intensely courteous to ladies, and believed in their hearts that all members of the "fair sex" were beautiful. They both pronounced the u in "put" as we pronounce it in "but," and said they were much "obliged" when any service was rendered them. They both had unnumbered prejudices, and a multitude of fine and noble qualities. They are both dead.

With them has gone the meal at which they used to preside. The old-fashioned dinner is dead. It held out stoutly for a long time in consequence of the substantial nature of its resources, and the strength of its constitution, but it gave in at last, and the flowers of the new dinner decorate its tomb.

The old-fashioned dinner holds its place in one's regard, and many are the ancient associations which endear it to one's memory. The soup, the fish, the four corner-dishes, the haunch of mutton, and the pair of boiled fowls, how regularly these used to appear to you, how candidly they revealed themselves before you! The new dinner is more elegant, no doubt, but it is less cordial. The dishes steal round behind you in a furtive manner, and insinuate themselves over your left shoulder as if eating were a thing to be ashamed of, and as if the proper diet for the refined beings of this age were flowers, and fruit, and lemon biscuits, and chips. The new dinner is more convenient, better suited to our hours, more graceful; it is a banquet, a light luxurious supper—let it prosper, but still let us say a kind word at parting to the old-fashioned dinner—

which died, by-the-by, quite suddenly at last of apoplexy.

If the career of the deceased meal was a failure, if it have been wisely superseded, as I think it has, it yet must not be condemned too severely, for its faults were lovable. It is true that flowers and fruit are more beautiful than stewed pigeons and cauliflowers with white sauce. It is true that the joint and the fowls were getting cold at the top and bottom of the table while those same pigeons were making their rounds; true that the carving was often a severe tax on the guests, and a hindrance to conversation; true that the putting the dessert on table over the heads of the company was a great nuisance; true that there were plenty of defects connected with the whole thing; still it must be admitted that there was something intensely jolly and hearty about that old banquet. "Let me give you some of this mutton, my dear Jawbones;" there was something appetising about such an address from a jovial old boy at the bottom of the table. The silently offered food of the new system is much less inviting.

What pressing used to go on, too, over the viands of old. If this was a bore, which very often it was, it still was an error on the side of that cordiality which I claim as belonging to the old-fashioned dinner. "I say, Cockle, you're never passing that curry; my dear boy, you must and shall have some. James, take that curry back to Mr. Cockle. I never heard of such a thing."—"Mrs. Fingerglass, you are taking positively nothing whatever, now do let me give you this merrythought." Of course, if you had had enough, if you were not hungry, or if you were cross, all this pressing was a bore, but still it sprang from an excess of hospitality. At all events, we can afford to speak mercifully of the practice now, for it is dead. We are urged on to indigestion now, only by our own appetites, and the host of the evening is no party, except passively, to our nights of torture.

Yes, there was an immense heartiness of feeling about the old festival. The master of the table used to take you in hand, and watch over you, and out of this would spring many a warm-hearted word, and no doubt feelings of hospitality would be generated by acts of hospitality. I fancy that a jolly old fellow at the end of the table saying, with a twinkling eye, "Let's have a glass of wine together, Jawbones; glad to see you, old boy," felt for the said Jawbones a sentiment of regard which would have been wanting if that ceremonial had not taken place between the two.

As a Small-Beer Chronicler I am naturally affected by small things, and I mourn over the death of that old custom of "taking wine." I do not want to vex the ghost of that same practice; it cannot be galvanised into life again. Indeed, it was no doubt a remnant of the dark ages, and led the master of the feast on to imbibe so much sherry that he must have burnt like a

coal all night after a dinner-party, but still it was a mighty pretty custom, and I for one, when a venerative youth, have felt a thrill of joy at being kindly nodded to over a bumper by some distinguished personage who had asked me to take wine. But woe's me, this will all be Hebrew to many people; for, more dead than mutton, or door-knocker, is that quality of Veneration to which I have just alluded as giving such an importance to the deceased custom of "taking wine."

So much for the old-fashioned dinner. It was alive and flourishing, some fifteen years ago, but now it is dead, and we shall not see it again any more, for ever. Let us toast it once, drinking out of one of those old champagne-glasses which were so very awkward for gentlemen with large noses. Then let us smash the old glass, and consign both it, and the dinner at which it figured, to oblivion.

The world gets wiser as it gets older, and most of our changes are wise changes, and for the better. There is, however, one danger connected with, and perhaps inseparable from, our modern improvements, which the Small-Beer Chronicler may be perhaps excused for mentioning. There seems to be some risk of our drilling ourselves into too uniform and regular a pattern. We are losing variety of character and getting wonderfully alike. Our mode of living, our way of talking, of dressing, is all beginning to be chalked out for us, and we depart from the established code at such peril that scarce any one departs from it. I am anticipating, however, in saying this, and getting on to a portion of my chronicle which is to come later. What I have to do now, is to record simply the decay of certain social practices, the removal from the scene of certain bygone and once-valued performers.

Continuing my list of Deaths, let me record next the Death of the country-dance. Its dissolution may be fitly enough mentioned here after a registration of the death of the old-fashioned dinner, for the two were firm and established friends. The country-dance is dead. When in the present day four acquaintances happen to meet in the street, and in shaking hands manage to cross their arms, nobody now says "hands across" as a mot adapted to the occasion.

I dare say few persons will be found to wear mourning for the Death of the country-dance. Its life was a long one, its decay was very gradual, and it would revive from time to time even after every one fondly imagined that it had received the coup de grace. Continually was it urged into a new show of vitality by kind and loving old friends who would affectionately entreat the poor old thing to rouse itself up and "make an effort." Who has not seen this tough old customer rally, and break out at the conclusion of an evening to the dismay of the new generation? Then how would the members of the old society rally round their ancient friend, and support his tottering steps. "We are going to have a country-dance," the

hostess of the evening would proclaim, "so now, Mr. Totterington, you must positively stand up"—"Mrs. Witherspoon, we shall not let you off."

At the mention of their old friend the country-dance, these two, and many more such couples, revived and hastened to the rescue. And who shall wonder at it? We know little of the associations they had with that (to us) preposterous figure, and those jiggling steps. In our eyes it has many defects. The young ladies and young gentlemen of the day will tell you that they do not like to stand in rows separated from each other; that to be half an hour without speaking to your partner or taking any important share in the dance, is a bore; and that it is small compensation to have to go down the middle and up again as hard as you can a score of times when, at length, your turn for action does come. To stand inactive, one of a row of gentlemen or ladies, as the case might be, while a middle-aged lady in a cap, and a smiling old gentleman with a bald head were performing obsolete antics at the other end of the room, and from time to time descending the human avenue, breathless, in a palsied canter—this is the idea of the country-dance which exists in the minds of the modern swain and damsel. That old dance wears a different aspect to the older race. Mrs. Witherspoon, of the blonde cap, whose existence you had been ignorant of till the dance began, remembers, as the well-known tune is played, the night when Mr. Witherspoon asked her to dance at the Assembly-room at Cheltenham. She remembers the preliminary scraping of the fiddles, the very look of the gentleman who led the band. She could tell you how far down the dance, she and her partner were when they began, and who stood next to her, and who next to *him*, and how gallant he looked with his blue coat and his hair in Brutus, and his black pantaloons and silk stockings. It was at the close of that dance, and as they walked to the sixpence a cup tea-room, that he spoke, and she listened. And shall we wonder that a country-dance is something wonderful to this same old lady, and ask ourselves in astonishment what any one could see that was attractive in its antiquated figure?

With the country-dance in its glory we have, in this chronicle, nothing to do. It would not become a Small-Beer Chronicler to go so far back. Such a recorder should deal with the changes of the moment, of the last fifteen years. Within such a period the country-dance was alive; it was not flourishing, it was shaky on its pins, but still it *was* alive. Now it is dead, and the valse à deux temps reigns in its stead.

And while we are talking of dancing and of death—a queer Holbein combination—we have another dissolution to announce, which has certainly taken place within the period whose changes we are examining.

The ballet is dead. Fresh in the memory of all of us who have attained to five-and-thirty years is the period when the rage for the ballet equalled that for the opera. The last new ballet was the talk of the town. Dancers were raved

about and received enormous salaries, and their portraits were all over the town. We have outgrown this taste, and we have done well. Not entering into the question of the propriety or impropriety of the ballet, we may at least say that it was preposterously ridiculous and often preposterously ugly. There were tragic situations too, if you please, in your ballet. It has been thought rather a difficult thing to swallow the musical misery of the opera; and some matter-of-fact persons have been unable to sympathise with the sorrows of a lady or gentleman who could sing bravura songs about his or her injuries and afflictions. What was this, however, to the dancing miseries of the ballet heroine? We might put up with horror expressed in a high note; but in a hop, skip, and a jump, who could recognise despair? Yet you were asked to do this. Contracts of marriage were signed by maidens pirouetting with very despair, who were hunted about the stage by bounding elder brothers of ferocious appearance. The confidante who sympathised with the maiden, expressed her emotion by means of a succession of lofty capers; and the village-girls who espoused the injured one's cause, gave vent to their indignation by turning their backs on the frantic victim and dancing away at the public with might and main.

And how ugly, for the most part, everything was that was connected with this ballet. What hideous dresses were worn. It would be hard to imagine anything more ungraceful than the short petticoats sticking out like a pen-wiper. And what a misapprehension of what is beautiful and fit, to encourage women in those tours de force by which the muscles of their legs were enlarged and their feet swelled to gouty proportions! The wonderful achievements of the old ballet were impossible except to performers gifted with a strength of bone and muscle altogether incompatible with womanly grace or beauty. Yet how those connoisseurs of the old time used to flock to their omnibus-box. How knowing they thought it to be seen there with their opera-glasses. What a triumph to get, or to fancy they got, one of the professional "wreathed smiles" which it was a point of business to lavish around. The frequenters of that omnibus-box belonged for the most part to an age earlier than that which comes within the province of a Small-Beer Chronicler. Their wigs, and their rouge, and their plastered-up crow's-feet, show no longer. They died even before the ballet.

It is all up—to use a popular expression—now, with the ferocious old miller with a daughter to marry; all up with Lubin, who, when the miller's back was turned, would skip on to the stage and solace himself with a *pas de deux* in company with his beloved, and which *pas de deux* was supposed to be expressive of eternal constancy. It is all up with the rich and wicked neighbour whom the miller thought, and perhaps with reason, a better match, on the whole, than the sprightly Lubin. It is all up with the old foster-mother (Madame Copère),

who used to wring her hands and swear that Pauline should be made happy yet. All up with the mill and the splashing water, all up with the happy peasants, and the notary, and the benevolent priest—for all these things were parts of the ballet, and the ballet is no more. Its ghost haunts the stage in feeble entertainments introduced in the main body of the opera, but the thing itself is virtually dead, and so we will bury it in peace without more ado.

OWEN'S MUSEUM.

It was a national museum was the museum originated by this great Englishman, and called (by the nation) after him; free to all comers and open at all times; so I walked in to learn a little of what the world was like when life was young, and to follow in the track of those fine progressive steps which have led up from the rude beginnings of all things, to the highest development yet known to humanity.

I turned first to the geological room, where the grim old primary rocks of granite, and quartz, and felspar, and mica, and soft dark-grey slate, and bright sprinklings of ruby-coloured garnet like the first drops of blood, stood out as the bones of the earth, before clothed with flesh or muscle.

Then came the Silurian or limestone, with fossil remains of encrinurites, those graceful "stone lilies" which once waved their lovely living fronds in the warm seas side by side with corals and sponges and feathery polypes, and molluscs, soft and flabby, living in their cockle-shaped shells, and fishes of low organisation, and other sea things of early date—a stratum, in fact, due to these molluscs and polypes, who had left their stone houses in remembrance of their existence, and in aid of the future, which they, too, were destined to advance and inform.

The next series was the coal formation, with its mighty forests of reeds and pine; the organic life of the world not yet going beyond sea things, and a huge fish passing into the lizard—the first hint of the future severance of land and water, and an earnest of the great changes to be soon wrought. And yet not so soon; for in the next deposits, the red sandstones, called also the saliferous, or salt-bearing, we have very few fossils, and chiefly of the same class as before, but of higher types and larger size; adding, though, one important link, the amphibious labyrinthodon, that huge-snouted toad-like reptile, the first air-breathing animal as yet born into time, equally at home in the water among the fishes, or on the mud with the worms and slimy things abounding. But if poor in remains of organic life, how rich that series is in other things—how full of iron blood, pouring colour and strength and vigour through the veins of the earth!—how grand in its magnificent preparation for the wonders to come!

For now we fall upon the oolite or free-stone layer—that speckled granular stratum,

called by the Germans roestone, and by us, if translated out of its Greek disguise of oön, "eggstone." And here the coiled chain of Creation grows thicker and fuller, and the foot-prints of olden times are more strongly marked and more clearly revealed. In the various successive formations which go to make up the series, we come upon the pterodactyle, darkening the air with its enormous wings and fierce dragon's head; the ichthyosaurus or fish lizard, more frightful than any crocodile of the tropics or American alligator; the plesiosaurus, another old-world crocodile; the zeuglodon, or first sketch of a water mammalian or whale, even more clumsy and very much more vicious than the harmless old giant of the present; the phascolotherium, or pre-Adamite kangaroo, pouched and hopping like its descendants; with other marsupials, like what we find in Australia, only bigger, and fiercer, and uglier. For, the world was not then as lovely as it is now, but huge, and monstrous, and uncouth—a mere seething steaming caldron of heated mud and turbid water, inhabited by fierce monsters always warring together. And in this museum there are pictures of all this, and descriptions of everything belonging.

The next step is to the chalk formation, with its myriads of microscopic remains and flinty atoms of former life. And here I begin to see the wonders of creation more fully than before. For, there are cases full of enlarged models and drawings of those insects now known as chalk and flint, with the tiny originals on slides beside them, and a microscope all ready for comparison. Models and figures, too, of the newly-developed creatures then swarming through the giant reeds down to the restless seas; those mighty lizards and tortoises and horrid toads, and that strange walking reptile, the iguanodon—preparing the way for the more perfect four-footed mammalia, in their turn to culminate in (except woman) the best two-legged thing we know of—man. And then we come to the rich loamy tertiary period, when the megatherium or great beast, and the mylodon, travestied the modern sloth, and the mastodon and the mammoth or elephas primigenius, ate roots and leaves, and had long trunks and clumsy feet, like the elephants we know of; when the palæotherium or old beast was horse, rhinoceros, and tapir all in one, before Nature had parcelled off each specialty apart; when the megaceros surpassed in size the big-necked, heavy-antlered American elk; and when there were huge cats, and bears, and snakes, and monkeys, and ostriches or bird-beasts, and all kinds of crawling things and creeping things and flying things and slimy things; and all kinds of shells and fishes and reptiles and beasts; when the thick forests were dense and matted, and the tall grass of the plains was coarse and jungle; when land and sea were busy and full of life, but given up to bigness, and strife, and fierceness, and disorder, in preparation for the higher state of things when man and his generation should appear.

But the geological department did not show me only models of old time, and by what strata and progressive organisms the earth has been made and life completed; though these were interesting and valuable enough; but it took in, as part of its teaching, mineralogy and crystallography, and the mighty changes wrought by natural chemistry; it ranged in their due order all the earths and the salts and the metals, all the gems and the rocks and the stones, and showed how one substance mixes itself up with others, and how iron and copper and sulphur, the great magicians and colouring agents of the world, paint and transform all things according to their fancy. There, in one part, were the three noble metals, with the rocks and veins in which they are generally found; gold from the red ferruginous river soils, or lying in nodules and spangles in granite, quartz, and talc, or giving value to copper and iron pyrites; silver, mixed up with its native alloys of gold and copper and arsenic and antimony, with chlorine and sulphur and alumina, in carbonate and fluat of lime, in sulphate of baryta and iron-stained clays, in pyrites and galena, or pouring its pleasant stream in small veins of glancing white through porphyry and syenite; and platinum, the third noble metal, found generally in company with gold, its yellow-faced brother, in the rich river sands, where its greyish-white grains lay so long undetected and uncared for, only of late years to be put to such uses as no other metal could serve.

In another part were iron and ironstone; magnetic iron or loadstone; meteoric iron in round masses often crystallised within, just as they fell from the skies; chromate of iron; green copperas which is a sulphate of iron; and crystals of iron, cherry red and very beautiful. And near to these were the forms of copper: copper pyrites rainbow-coloured, and blue carbonate of copper or blue malachite, and green carbonate of copper or green malachite, and that still rarer green, the best of all, called emerald malachite or diopside of copper, which is a mixture of copper and flint in proper proportions; and sulphate of copper or blue vitriol, and phosphate of copper, soft and silky and of a rich velvet green, sometimes called false or pseudo malachite, but marred with black spots and lines, and not so rich as the true kinds. Lead, as native, minium or oxide; carbonate, which is white lead or ceruse; arseniate; galena or sulphide; red lead or chromate, very rare, and making chrome-yellow of unequalled beauty, as the ceruse makes white paint fit for Titian, but both existing for all practical purposes only in name, imitations taking their place on the modern palette. And specimens of tin, both as tinstone, mixed with other metals and veining gneiss and granite and the other early rocks, and in loose rounded masses found among the sands of river-beds. The first is called block-tin, and the last stream-tin, or grain-tin, and is the purer of the two. Then there were the comparatively new metals; the rhodium and the iridium, which nib our metal pens; the

palladium, titanium, osmium, strontium, yttrium, and the rest, which have lately been of such value to us in "Fraunhofer's lines." And limestone in its simplicity of unsophisticated chalk; then, by the help of iron, rising to dignity and beauty as marble—marble, brown and red and yellow and green and blue, black as night, and white as solid snow, ashen grey, and black with white shells and strange coralline forms shining through, variegated with many colours, and speckled and diverse like a block of compressed sand; rising into still higher dignity and beauty as alabaster, satin spar, rock-milk, the double refracting Iceland spar, and others cognate; which, however, are only carbonates of lime, or lime in combination with carbon, raised up to be ideals of grace and beauty for all time. Successive bits of lignite, jet, brown coal, and anthracite, showed the transition from buried wood to fossil fuel, with the forms of the plants and trees whence they have come, clearly figured beside them. And then there was flint in its primitive form of fire-flint buried in its rustic jacket of chalk, all the remains of those microscopic little beings known to science as the diatomaceæ, as I said before. And in the flint department I found chalcedony, and blood-red cornelian, onyx banded black and white, and sardonyx banded red and white, and jasper, and agates, and the quartz series—Derbyshire spar, and the lovely crystals of false amethyst and chrysoprase, and rock crystal, and rose quartz, and others of the same kind and generation, culminating at last in the ideal of flint—the noble opal and its varieties; for opal is only flint and water—flint in its supreme and highest development, with one-fifth or one-eighth of water at its heart.

Then, there was alumina as earth, and aluminium as metal; and the crystals proceeding—sapphire and ruby and Oriental emerald and topaz and amethyst; and nodules of turquoise, which is only phosphate of alumina and lime, coloured with the oxides of iron and copper; and lapis lazuli, which is a combination of soda, lime, and alumina, coloured with sulphide of iron; and jade-stone and soap-stone and their congeners—mere magnesia, lime, and clay; and chrysolite, the gem or crystal of magnesia; and talc and serpentine, meerschaum and hornblende, the silicates of magnesia, or flint and magnesia in union together. And there was a case of mercury or quicksilver, in its native state from the silver mines, and as the red sulphide, called cinnabar, whence our painters get their vermilion, as a chloride or "horn mercury," and in great grey crystals. And masses of sulphur from Sicily and other volcanic regions, pale primrose-yellow; and cobalt, both grey and impure from its native alloy, and richly blue, with all its arsenic and iron and nickel got out of it; and carbon as graphite and other things, culminating in its ideal, the diamond; and the crystal of glucina, the emerald or beryl, with the earth and its metal beside it; and zirconium topped by its crystal, the blood-red hyacinth; and orpiment

or yellow sulphide of arsenic, brilliantly yellow and glistening; and everywhere the uses and transformations of all these materials shown and written, and the life and being of the world told in the plain language of nature and science throughout.

From the geological-room, with all its passionless beauty, I passed to the creatures, almost as passionless, who make their homes in the deep sea, and live and love—if they do love—in the rayless fathoms at the roots of the earth. Shells of all colours and all shapes and sizes, were ranged in cases there. Pink and yellow and green and purple, rainbow-coloured and opaque white, but all with an indefinable likeness to the soft tints seen in the sky and on the water by the sea-side. And of all shapes: some spiral, others flat; some convolute, others smooth; some with thick clumsy edges like cabinet-work done by a rude-handed village carpenter, and others spreading out their doorways in fine filmy curtains, so transparent and delicate one wonders how they ever live through the storm-waves at all. Some banded and tiger-like, others spotted and leopard-like; some ribbed with strong flying buttresses, others bound about with small ornamental fillets notched and cut into airy nothingness; some smooth and polished, others rugged and rough, and others again spiny and pricking; cockle-shells and limpets of simplest form, and the many-chambered murex, the nautilus, and the triton; shells heart-shaped, and razor-shaped, and tulip-tinted; little innocent white cowries which are to shells what daisies are to flowers, and the larger kinds—the map and music and mole and money and pig cowries, and the small-pox cowry; the tear and the rough tear cowry, and poached-eggs, and spindles, and weavers' shuttles, and that large turned-lipped, tortoiseshell-coloured cypræa, also a cowry, which used to be so common on chimney-pieces a few years ago, and where one can hear the sea roar grandly at any time. Perhaps not so grandly as in that red whelk, or "roaring buckie," which in Zetland is used as a lamp, and where the cottage children of Scotland listen to the waves imprisoned within its cells. And all these in due and fit order; not one known to man wanting; with a history of their localities, and ranged as they come by natural sequence.

Then there were coloured models and preserved specimens of the soft unformed-looking things inhabiting these beautiful homes; and large glass worlds of all such as could be induced to live and thrive in captivity, and a reasonable depth of water. The paper nautilus was there, crawling at the bottom with its shell on its back, and its strange staring eyes peering out from among its curved and uplifted oars, or shooting through the water, all its members gathered up into an arrowy mast; and hideous cuttle-fish were there, with their fiendish-looking arms extended; and star-fish, unwholesome-looking; and stinging but delusive jelly-fish; and sea-flowers putting out their bright petals, and sensitive to even a shadow passing over them; and gaunt, busy little shrimps, and fringed-lipped loach, and

small flounders that covered themselves as if with a cloak, and sea-slugs, and oysters, and mussels; and all the creatures that can possibly be got together in vivariums; and more than have ever been got together before—with plenty of marine foliage to promote their health and enjoyment.

Much more than I can describe was in this fish department; for there was never such a museum before, and nothing has been left out. All the bright-sealed fishes from the Indian seas were there: the bat-fish with its large overshadowing wings, the butterfly-fish winged and peacock-spotted, the flying-fish, the gorgeous chætodons, the sword-fish, our own salmon—as parr and smolt and grilse; frightful eels—not a variety wanting—singing-fish from Ceylon, minnows and trout and perch, char from the Cumberland lakes and anchovies from the Italian seas; instances of all the eight hundred named species now known to science, living or preserved, and the larger ones stuffed. All the whales—specially the mysticete or true whale, so fast disappearing from the world of the northern waters, and unable to cross or live in what is to it the burning, foodless, sandy desert of the tropical seas; the grass-eating manatee; the male sea-elephant with a proboscis like his cousin of the jungle and the walrus, with ivory tusks as his likeness; the sea-lion and the sea-bear, the one with a shaggy mane, the other with a thick coat of fur; all the sharks, with their eggs done up in mermaids' purses—the basking shark, sometimes cast up on British shores, and thirty feet long at least; the hammer-headed shark, and the rays, and the skates, and the dog-fish proceeding; riband-fishes forty feet long; sea snakes in plenty; and the silvery vaagmaer not thicker than a table-knife; things hitherto known only by picture-books now to be seen for the first time in perfect form and preservation; and the student who wanted to know what the water world was like, need only go in and study what was laid out for him to see. But there was no sea-serpent. Plenty of imitations, and creatures which bad eyes have so often mistaken, and loose lips sworn to as the veritable old snake undoubted; but we have not caught him yet for our museum, and I question much if we ever shall. It was a strange gallery this, and a long chain with, at one end of it, the fabulous mermaid, or rather the dugong holding her young to her breast with a fin that has a skeleton like a hand within it, and at the other end things that looked like seaweed, and wrack, and waving flowers, and were of no higher organisation than a bag of slimy jelly, sparingly gifted with a certain power of digestion and reproduction.

Interesting, if unpleasant, was the reptile room, full of crocodiles and lizards, tortoises, frogs, and serpents. Some were very curious. There were the lizards, strange pouched and frilled things from the seething tropics, sketchy beasts with starting eyes and rudimentary hands for feet; flying lizards with fringed wings; and lizards with leafy tails; lizards with ruffs and collars round their necks, which they could

spread out like an umbrella or a fan; lizards of all hues, brown, green, grey; including the hideous iguana of the American woods—good for eating, by-the-by—and the much-slandered sharp-toed gecko; the broad-backed varanide, likeliest to the fossil Saurians of all extant; and that lovely little green jewel, all grace and life, to be seen panting and flashing in the sunshine on Italian walls. And there were our own newts and efts, so deadly to tadpoles, which form a connecting link between amphibia and lizards, and belong, it would seem, indiscriminately to either; as does the amphiuma of South America, that thing like a four-footed eel, something like a newt and a clumsy water-worm combined, and the two-legged "siren"—not very like the sirens of romance. And I saw the various salamanders, from the enormous Japanese monster lately introduced to the Zoological Gardens, to that smaller creature about which such unnatural fables were once believed, and such unblushing falsehoods told; as well as the fossil remains of that which good Andrew Schuchzer labelled "man, witness of the deluge," believing he had found the geological testimony which not the boldest sceptic could deny. Never dreaming, honest man, that he had called the bones of a frightful scaly voracious lizard, the bones of our forefathers!

And then, following on to the newts and efts, came the frogs and toads of English ponds and foreign marshes—frogs in all their stages of tadpole development, with enlarged models of the more embryonic stages, and toads, big, bloated, but maligned; bull-frogs, with their hideous voices; small tree-frogs, or hylas, with their knobbed toes; green frogs, edible and delicate; Surinam toads or pipas, inconceivably hideous, with their little ones lodging in cells on their backs; the disgusting water reptile, called *protonopsis horrida*, much dreaded by fishermen, and with reason; and another *protonopsis*, found in the torrents of the Alleghanies, and called the alligator of the mountains, with which no one need wish to covet a very near acquaintance. And there were land tortoises, and marsh tortoises, and river tortoises, and sea tortoises—more properly turtles—who cry aloud when they are troubled, and snap and hiss when ill at ease. The poor sea turtles, which are eaten in soup at Birch's, and their luckless land brethren which are stripped of their bucklers for the adornment of our women's heads; at least one, the *testudo imbricata*, which can never keep its shell on its back if caught sight of by a man with a stick and sufficiently strong arms to turn it over in the sand. There were specimens of all kinds, the hawkbill and the coriaceous from the sea, both bad for food, and the last poisonous; the serpentina from the marsh, with a very small buckler—beginning, indeed, to vanish into scales, and as much like a crocodile as a tortoise; and the fringed matamata, also a marsh beast, and very odd in its appearance and development.

And then came the worms and the snakes; entozoa, human and animal; earth-worms and blind-worms; the *amphisbœna*, or creature

"walking both ways," frightful but harmless, and a "link;" small flat-headed vipers and adders, whip-snakes and black snakes—among the deadliest of all—puff-adders and horned-adders, rattlesnakes, cobras, and pythons; and the skeletons and localities of each, and what their habits and what their character, and what the colonist had better do if bitten by any of them abroad. But I did not linger long among the snakes, graceful as they are, and lovely in line and colour. There is a kind of instinctive enmity between them and man, which makes them dreaded even when batted down under glass hatches, and not delighted in when preserved in spirits and coiled within bottles. From the reptiles to the mammalia was but a step; and I made it gladly.

But I am not writing a catalogue, so I cannot go through a hundredth part of the eight thousand specimens contained in this department. There were all the elephants—great clumsy beasts; the elephant from the Himalaya, which in its youth is covered with hair—a transitional condition of modern elephants, but permanent in their forefathers, the mammoths—white elephants, and other Asiatics, smaller-eared and more intelligent than their clumsier African brethren; rhinoceroses, two-horned, from Africa and Sumatra—the Sumatran the most like the fossil rhinoceros of all, and hairy in its youth—and one-horned from Central Asia, Java, and Borneo; three of each variety—male, female, and young; wild pigs and boars with bristling tusks, and home-fed porkers with eloquent suggestions about them; and all the other pachydermata, down to the little donkey foal on the common. And then there were camels and dromedaries, cushion-footed for the desert; and llamas, which are the South American camels, with strong curved nails for climbing rocks. And the llamas seemed to me transitional, being as much like big-boned sheep as camels, and passing by easy steps into vicuñas, long-haired and silky, and merinos also with long silky tresses, then into moufflons, the moufflons becoming in time fat-tailed sheep and woolly-backed southdowns. The goats, again, seemed but a variety on the one side of the wild sheep of the mountains, and of clean-limbed deer on the other. For, the ibex is as much deer as goat to look at, and the prong-horn, an antelope, is as often called "the goat" as anything else. And so I passed on to the large family of the cervidæ, the reindeer, red deer, and moose deer, with the antelopes of Africa too numerous to mention, and the lovely little gazelles, and the musk-deer of India, the smallest thing of its kind that goes. Branching off in another direction, by the nyghau and the gnu, to the buffaloes and bulls and bison, and sleek white Brahmin cow, worth more than a man's life in Hindustan. These oxen are strange beasts, too. The grunting yak, the shaggy musk-ox with hair that can be spun like silk, and that has been spun like silk, the big American buffalo, and the dainty little Breton milker that you can tether on your lawn, our own sleek Alderneys, and

brisker Highland blackies, have many points of likeness certainly, but very many of difference. The horse tribe keeps more together; but the dogs range as wild and wide as any. A wolf and a little King Charles's spaniel are not very much alike, yet they grow in successive steps, odd as it may seem, and to many, doubtful.

And then I turned to the dangerous classes, the leopards and panthers and tigers; lions, maned and orthodox, and the maneless from Guzerat; the puma, or South American version of this kind of beasts; the cheetah, or hunting leopard; tiger-cats, ocelots, and the pampas cat—more like a domestic puss in form than the gaunt Egyptian cat; ounces and jaguars, lynxes booted at the feet and tasseled at the ear; the wild English cat, very rare now, and found only in the north; bringing up before the tortoiseshell tabby lapping milk by the home fireside. Weasels and skunks and martens and ferrets and polecats, the ermine with its spotless fur, and others tell me that they, and many more, belong to the order of the Mustelidæ; and this museum has a beautiful specimen of each, set in its proper surroundings, not all huddled together in one case—the arctic with the tropical—and no sign of their natural condition about them. Then there were wolves and foxes and bears and racoons and hedgehogs, and the pretty little chinchilla in its suit of soft grey, and its congener, the viscacha or marmot-Diana, from South America; the civet and the genet, both with odiferous pouches; the brown coati, the ugly meerkat, and the souslik rat, bringing us by gradations I cannot follow to the true "rodentia." So I looked at the rats and the mice, the dormice and the guinea-pigs, the beavers and porcupines, hares and rabbits and jumping hares, jerboas, kangaroo rats, capybaras, agoutis, and pacas, squirrels and flying squirrels, the aye-aye—looking like a monkey, and as much monkey as squirrel—and I wondered at the links which make a rat the ancestor of an ape.

Thus, then, are the bats, the vampire bat, and the large and fleshy cruel-looking pteropina, very unlike our pretty little flitter-mice that skim through the evening air, and frighten bare-headed girls by getting caught and entangled in their hair. And I saw by what beautiful gradations they pass into the lemuriidæ; and the lemurs are degraded monkeys, or, perhaps, monkeys are selected lemurs. But monkeys have nothing half so pretty as the graceful little loris, or that tender-souled creature called Bashful Billy, so loving and so sensitive, to whom the Hindus give the same name as they give to the sensitive plant, dajjalû. But before I went over to the "quadrumanæ" as represented by the monkeys—the lemurs are quadrumanæ, or four-handed, too—I walked to the cases where the ornithorhynchus takes three several characteristics to himself; where the opossums and kangaroos, and that hideous Tasmanian wolf, and others of the marsupials, set the fashion of pockets long before man was born; where the wombat is like a bad copy of a bear, and the ursine opossum

has the descriptive name of native devil; where the pig-footed bandicoot wears his apron-pocket as well as the best of them; and Norfolk Island contributes a flying squirrel, like any other flying squirrel. And then I turned to the marmosets, which have always been great favourites of mine. And then to the marmoset monkeys, with the midas rosalia, or silky tamarind, the prettiest little beast alive. The lion monkey, the smallest monkey of all, is also a very lovely thing, with its shaggy brow, as shaggy and intelligent as a Maltese lion-dog's or Skye terrier's, and with none of the disagreeable characteristics of its tribe.

And now I went along the monkey cases; and there I saw the kahau, or long-nosed monkey—so like a friend of mine,—the nest-building ape, the long-armed gibbons, the chimpanzee, the orang-outan, and the terrible gorilla, which caricature humanity so closely, and make one shudder at the theory of "links." And yet, what if, in very truth, the grandfather of all life should be a polype, and an ape the parent of humanity? Long-tailed monkeys and tailless apes, preacher monkeys, green monkeys, blue-nosed baboons, Diana monkeys, widow monkeys, howling monkeys, spider monkeys and sapajous, funny little monkeys all mirth and mischief, and fierce old sinner monkeys with bad consciences and worse instincts—all were there, not one wanting. And with each his natural conditions of favourite haunt and favourite food; and representations on paper of what could not be preserved in substance.

In another room were the bones of every beast and bird and fish known to man; and all collected together so that the student of comparative anatomy might have at least the framework to begin on. And up-stairs were insects, birds, and plants; but I had not time to look at them all in one day; so I left them for the present, until I should go again to Bloomsbury, and walk again through the galleries of the noblest museum in all the world.

Alas! In the world of the future though; not in the world of the present. Many of the creatures that I have named, hundreds that I have not spoken of, are mouldering in the vaults under the British Museum, or are deep in the sea, or are tight in the rock, or are away in the desert and the jungle; but all are accessible, if we will follow the advice of our greatest living naturalist, and spend so many thousand pounds in making our museum of natural history what it ought to be—the best, the completest, the largest, the most capacious in the world; with every specimen fairly displayed, and all accessories of habitation, locality, and habits, shown and explained as well.

This magnificent Museum exists at present only in the charming anticipation of it sketched by PROFESSOR OWEN, with his own ardent love of Nature, his own profound knowledge of her, and with the modesty and gentleness that his great learning has confirmed in his nature. Such a museum will exist, in England, one day; and when that day comes to pass, I hope the English

people will remember who designed it, and will call it by the name of their famous countryman.

AN INTERESTING YOUNG PERSON.

JOHN never deceived me but once. It was when we were staying in town. We had been dining out, and, on returning home at night, John suddenly stopped the brougham at (of all places in the world) the top of Saint Martin's-lane, saying he would walk the remainder of the way, and smoke his cigar. I remember he had on a peculiarly rough old coat, my aversion, over his dinner-dress, and also that he wore his worst hat.

He did not come home till half-past one!

I was up before him in the morning, and seeing this coat in the ante-room, which was already redolent of tobacco, took it up to put it in the hall, when out fell a little printed bill. There was a woodcut at the top, representing two horrid men, very scantily attired, squaring at each other with hands nearly as big as their heads; and the bill announced that Bigge Brooser, the celebrated champion of the catch-weights, and Jack Whopley, of Preston, had kindly consented to "set-to" on the occasion of Mike Maggles's benefit, when a delightful treat might be confidently expected.

This is the reason that John's cigar took two hours and a half to smoke!

We left London. Once more in our sweet quiet village, and much occupied with my darling Tiddlepops, from whom I had been separated nearly three weeks, I had almost forgotten the circumstance above mentioned, when I happened to go into the library to see what new books John had ordered. I declare I think he pricks off the first half-dozen on the list of new publications, and takes his chance. Two works on India; one on the Arctic regions; The Booby Brothers, by Lady Selina Phiskin; Over Yonder, by the Honourable Rufus Wiggles, of Alabama, with portrait of the author in full English costume. Then some pamphlets, then a newspaper, John's favourite, with no fewer than eight columns of what the dreadful editor calls "fistic matter," besides all sorts of extraordinary Answers to Correspondents; such as, "Nosey; Yes." "B.; We should say a milksop." "Phil Bounce; We think you'd better." Advertisements, too: "Alf Bramble invites his friends and admirers to a select harmonic meeting." Young Phizzig's benefit, complete ovation. "Dozey Buggs indignantly denies, ever refused, fight Porkey Steggars," &c. &c. &c.

I threw the paper aside, and sat down in John's chair to reflect a little. I had something on my mind. For some time past, there had been a singular change in my husband's demeanour. He was not ill, for I had observed that his appetite, though capricious, had by no means failed him; and he took his usual out-door exercise without much apparent fatigue; but he seemed anxious, irritable, indifferent to the things in which he hitherto had taken the greatest

interest; hardly noticed his darling child! He had left off reading, and nothing seemed to have power to distract the gloomy thoughts that weighed upon him, except, strange to say, that very paper which I had just thrown down in disgust! The result of my cogitations was, that I would never quit that apartment until I had coaxed or wrung from dear John the cause of his melancholy. Hardly had I taken this resolution, when I heard his listless step in the passage. Before he had fairly crossed the threshold, I attacked him:

"John, dear John, what is the matter? Oh, John, how changed you are!"

"Stuff, dear—changed?"

"You've something or other on your mind."

"Most people have."

"I've watched you day and night."

"I'm very much obliged to you, my dear."

"And I've found——"

"Found out *what*?" asked John, sharply.

"That you've lost your usual habits, taken to cigars, acquired a distaste for the nursery; yes, grown careless about your darling child, our own Topsy-wopsy-pips. If I mention that he has cut another pretty toosens, you look as bewildered as if I had addressed you in Chinese. Oh, John, my husband," I continued, warming as I proceeded, "what is the meaning of this fearful apathy? Tell me, I entreat, I conjure you."

"Don't be a goose, Cissy," was the rather rude reply. "You'll break your hoop. But, set your heart at rest, my dear; you shall know *all*. I have been for some time anxiously expecting a visitor. Something, I much fear, has befallen him."

"Do you mean an accident in the train?"

"Hem—yes—the train. He promised to give me notice by letter, as he might possibly have a companion, a very interesting young person, of whom great expectations are entertained."

"Who is your friend?" I inquired.

"A man of considerable weight, my dear."

"A public man?"

"Very decidedly so," said my husband, quickly. "I may say, an extremely public individual."

"Is he a person of property, John? What is the name of his place?"

"His place? Place? Oh, Something Court, I fancy. He wrote the address with his own hand, but I fear I've lost it."

"Dear me!" I exclaimed, "can it be that very dirty card Benjamin picked up in the hall? Here it is, on the mantelpiece. But what an odd hand your friend writes! F. I. D.—Fiddlecourt, Por—Por—tugal. Does he live in Portugal, John?"

"His town mansion, my love, is in Portugal-lane, Haymarket, central situation, close to Parliament, the Post-office, and—ch?—in short, a good deal more."

"And here's his actual name—'B. I. G.—Bigge Brooser.'" (I paused a moment, fancying I had heard that name before.)

At this moment Benjamin came in with a letter for my husband. It was in the hand-

writing of his brother Adolphus, the vicar of Forlingham: a parish of the same name as our own, which circumstance leads to much confusion of letters.

John skimmed a few lines hastily, then burst into irrepressible laughter.

"Ha! ha! ha! Excellent! Hurrah! Here's the whole explanation. Dear old Dolly! Just listen:

"MY DEAR BROTHER.—The enclosed extraordinary communication having been misdirected hither, was opened by me. The language employed by your correspondent is sufficiently obscure. I can, however, understand that he proposes to set out immediately on a 'purfeshonal toor' in your county—that he has called to mind your invitation to take pot-luck at what he describes as your 'ken' (a word certainly beyond *mine*!), and requests you to knock him up a crib 'anywheres convenient.'

"He appears to be accompanied by an individual whom he terms 'his Novice,' and I regard it as a redeeming feature in this man's rude character that he should evince a tender, almost womanly, solicitude for the unfortunate young creature so singularly confided to his care.

"His charge respecting the airing the Novice's bed, and the preparation of nightly 'swizzle' (some species of anodyne, I take it), should in any case be borne in mind, and his gratified allusion to his protégé's 'condition' (meaning, I suppose, lungs), indicate the removal of some apprehensions on the score of delicacy of constitution.

"It would be affectation to deny that the name appended to this remarkable document—Bigge Brooser—is not wholly unfamiliar to me, nor will I pretend to be ignorant that the letters C.C.W. and B.H. may possibly signify 'Champion of the Catch-Weights, and Holder of the Belt;' but, my dear brother, I should ill perform my duty did I not—hm—hm—affectionately admonish—hm—hm—debasement associations. . . . Of the Novice I can say nothing. The situation of this young and interesting creature will be a sufficient appeal to the sensibilities of dear Cecilia. I need not, therefore, recommend him to her generous care—hm—hm—retiring youth—harmless inmate—hm—affectionate brother,

"ALDOLPHUS."

"John! John!" I exclaimed, sinking into the chair, "it's a prize-fighter!"

"You are right, my dear, it is," replied my husband, quite coolly. "And *then*?"

"They always beat their wives."

"On the contrary, their wives are the only people who can beat *them*."

"And all have broken noses."

"Nature has provided that Mr. Brooser's, at least, should be unsusceptible of further flattening."

"They use such bad, strange language. But what I most decidedly object to, is the bringing up of boys to this profession who might not have selected it for themselves. That I never, never could forgive! Think of Tiddlepops."

"Think of a mopstick! It's always a man's own choice. All the laws in the world can't make a man a boxer, nor all the laws in the world prevent it. He's born into the ring, like a poet to Parnassus; pugilism lays a maternal hand upon him, and claims him. He slips into

training as naturally as a young miss into dressing her doll. Nobody dissuades, nobody encourages."

"When do you expect this man?" I said, shuddering.

"At any moment. And I am sure I may rely upon you, my dear Cecilia, to receive him with as much affability as your not unnatural dislike to his profession will allow."

I assured John that it would not be for the horrid person's own sake that I consented to receive him at all, but solely for that of the poor young creature by whom he would be accompanied. In him I already felt an uncommon interest. I pictured to myself the pretty (I was sure he was pretty), fair-complexioned boy, with golden curls, clinging like a tender parasite to an old gnarled oak—gentle object of those caresses, that affection, which the rough giant, his singularly-chosen protector, lavished upon him, alone of all the world! I wondered what was the youth's name. I asked to be told his story.

"It is a melancholy narrative, my dear," said John; "but, since you insist upon it, know that this lad's papa was carried off, one morning, by a complaint in the throat, with such fatal suddenness, that the suspense, altogether, lasted but one hour. His mamma, having, I regret to say, a taste for strong waters, was offered a situation as workhouse nurse, but (in spite of the qualification I have mentioned) proving neither savage nor decrepid enough for that office, was quickly turned into the streets, where she was found lifeless beside a pump, having drunk from it in her despair. Mr. Brooser, noble-hearted fellow! saw and loved the boy. They are inseparable, at least—him—for the present."

It was, indeed, as my husband had observed, a truly pitiful tale. John saw that I was moved, and, probably thinking it a good moment to leave me to my reflections, kissed me, and went out for a ride.

If the boy could only come without Brooser! But that might scarcely be. John said they were inseparable. After all, the man might not be so very rough! I heard the tramp of John's horse in the carriage-sweep. He would be back in a couple of hours, and it was the most unlikely thing in the world that Brooser should come as soon as that. I found myself talking aloud, and addressing my darling, whom nurse had quietly brought in.

Nurse had been dismissed to her dinner, and I was attempting to give Tiddlepops his first lesson in writing (it was a kind of messy thing, that hit his fancy exactly), when Benjamin entered and announced—

"Please, 'm, a person."

"Who is it?"

"Please, 'm, he wouldn't give no name. I told him master was out; but he said the 'missis' would do. I was to say 'that party,' and you would be fly."

"D—do you think, Benjamin, he would like to call again?"

"Please, 'm, I wouldn't like to ask him. He's a settin' in the 'all."

"Does he want your master very particularly?"

"Yes, he do, 'm, very. He were to have gone to Captain Bishopes; but that gentleman's out a otter hunting; and the person he don't know where to take that other party which is ill. He wants some medical advice, the person do, for the party; and likewise a mug of beer for the person himself."

After all, perhaps he was a kind-hearted monster—an honest, right-minded ruffian. Could I consign such a man to the kitchen?

"I hope not, 'm," said Benjamin, who caught the last word, half uttered, in my bewilderment.

"Well, then, the housekeeper's room?"

"How'll Harriet like it?" said Benjamin, gloomily.

Something had to be done. The creature might be already exasperated at the delay. Then there was the Novice to be considered. The child might be seriously ill, and no "medical" advice, but John's, was at hand. I resolved to make the effort, and, drawing Popsy closer to me, desired Benjamin to show the stranger in.

There was a step in the passage that made the house sensibly vibrate. The door opened.

"Mr. Brooser," said Benjamin, faintly.

Thereupon, entered an individual whose stature I should rather under-estimate at six feet five. He had a large level countenance, like a teaboard: the original flatness of his nose not having (contrary to John's theory) preserved it from a further depression, the result of one of his many battles. The lower jaw was of enormous size. His hair was cut very close, as if he had just come out of prison.

"Servant, 'm," said Mr. Brooser, bowing, and closing the door, with one and the same curvature of his gigantic frame.

"G—good morning, Mr. Brooser. Pray take a chair. I am sorry to say that my husband is from home, but I hope you will await his return. He cannot be very long."

"Thankee, mum," replied Mr. Brooser; "sorry to ill-convenience. Fact is, I don't know what to do about that other party what we knows on. I'm in a regular fix, I am."

"What party, Mr. Brooser?"

"Why, that 'ere Novice o' hourn. What else *could* I be a thinking on?" said Mr. Brooser, with some severity.

"True, very true!" I exclaimed. "That is the very person of whom I am so anxious to hear the most minute particulars."

"Nat'rally," rejoined my visitor. "You must know, then, that his inside—"

"I beg your pardon, sir; for the medical part of the story, I think my husband—"

"Oh, 'tain't nothing particular, only you wanted for to know everything about him; consequently, as his insi—"

"Mr. Brooser, may I not offer you some refreshment?"

"No, thankee, mum; thankee kindly all the same. So, this is the babby I've heard on? Well, now, I don't know as I ever set eyes on a much prettier kid than that 'ere!"

I began somehow to like the man better.

"He is considered pretty, Mr. Brooser."

"He's better than pretty; he's muse'lar. Wot's beauty to bone? Bless his little fistes! Now, lookee, that's good fiber. If there was infant veights, I'd stand a pony on that wery fiber, and I'd land it, easy. But, as I was saying, this Novice o' hourn, his in——"

"I am sure, Mr. Brooser, you will find it very dull waiting for my husband. Would you not prefer taking a little walk in the iron-works, and coming back when you're tired?"

"Thankee, mum, I never *was* tired," said the obstinate man.

"You are quite sure you'd rather not go out?"

"Well, no, mum. To tell you the truth, you are so kind to me, a real lady, that's what *you* are," said Mr. Brooser, looking at me critically, with his head on one side, as if examining a curiosity; "and it's so seldom a rough chap like me gets welcomed to a droring-room and made s' much of, that, if it don't ill-convenience the party present, I'd rather stop here. I know they're bellering for me down yonder at Bryn-maur, but I ain't in the humour for a spar. Let 'em belier. A man can't be always a punching of heads. I wish he could! Now, here's the pint what we have to consider. About this 'ere Nov——"

"I am sure my husband will be rejoiced to find you here, Mr. Brooser," said I, a feeling of despair coming over me, "but I fear he will be somewhat late. We dined early, and I am now going to tea. Of course you don't take tea?"

I give the excellent champion the highest credit for having succeeded in banishing from his broad face every token of that disgust which must have possessed his soul at the mention of the beverage.

Mr. Brooser replied, with astonishing mildness, that he did not habitually take tea. That he had indeed tried it, with a toss of the best brandy for to give it a flavour. But, forasmuch as folks with strong stomachs seemed not to mind it, and he himself had no objection to look on, he would, if it wasn't a liberty, join me at the teaboard.

Of course I acceded, for, in spite of his rough uncouth manner, there was a natural politeness about the man that pleased me, and rendered my efforts to play the hostess much easier. I ordered Benjamin to place wine and spirits on the table, and we were about to sit down, when our neighbour, Mr. Augustus Littler, put his head in at the door. He started when his eye fell on my colossal companion, and seemed half disposed to retreat.

Mr. Brooser saw his hesitation.

"Perhaps," he said, "the gentleman is timid-like. Walk in, sir."

I hastened to confirm Mr. Brooser's invita-

tion, and added, that this was Mr. Brooser, of whom he must have heard.

"Well," said Mr. Brooser, in a half-aside, "I have seen a bigger, and now here's a Littler! 'Do, sir!'" continued the champion, standing about ten feet from Augustus, leaning very forward, and presenting his tremendous hand, a portion of which Augustus accepted and tried to shake, but couldn't.

At the repast which followed, Mr. Brooser was persuaded to take a glass of port wine and a biscuit. He was evidently on his very best behaviour, and determined to comport himself in accordance with the most approved drawing-room traditions. He was easy and conversational, and appeared for the moment to forget even the Novice.

"Thankee, mum, another glass, since you *are* so pressing. Towards your health. Likewise, Mr. Littler, I looks at you. This 'ere's good swizzle."

I shall not attempt to recal the whole conversation. Professional topics were, by mutual consent, avoided, and the champion might have passed for a harmless traveller who had never seen a doubled fist in his life.

One circumstance I must record. Mr. Brooser wore on one of his mighty fingers a gold ring of proportionate dimensions, which somehow attracted my attention. Aware of this, the champion exhibited the ornament so obtrusively, that, to be civil, I begged to examine it more closely.

The ring was tight, and the process of detaching it ingenious. Mr. Brooser first wetted his finger with the tip of his tongue, then, taking a dessert-knife, insinuated it beneath the hoop, and fairly prized it off. That effected, with a degree of delicacy I had not expected, he filipped the ring once or twice along the hearth-rug, that it might dry, and finally presented it to me in a tablespoon, as if it had been an oyster.

It had a device of two individuals, with little round bodies, crowned with little round heads, fighting.

"That," observed Mr. Brooser, in explanation, "is the device of the Qui Quæ Quums."

"The what?"

"The Qui—Quæ—Quums," repeated my guest, slowly and distinctly. "You would ask me who they ayre. That you can't know," continued Mr. Brooser, about to wink, but stopping himself cleverly, "till you're 'nitiated. We meets once a week, a whole lot of us. We dine together. Ladies goes in the gallery. Her most loyal Majesty——"

"The Queen, sir!" cried Mr. Littler, his surprise overcoming his shyness. "Do you mean that her Majesty——"

"If you hadn't countered so quick, sir," replied the champion, "you would have heard me remark that the Queen's Majesty, God bless her, is always the first toast of the Qui Quæ Quums. We elect by ballot. I've just proposed the Nov——By-the-by, what's a good thing for the insi——"

"What a very odd name, Mr. Brooser, the

Qui Quæ Quums!" said I, clinging in despair to that body.

"Well, it *do* sound queer," replied the champion, thoughtfully, as though the idea had never before occurred to him.

It was now verging upon baby's bedtime, and I sent him off. Augustus Littler, who had scarcely uttered a word, or once taken his eyes off Mr. Brooser, presently withdrew. The latter seemed disposed to remain, and I was thinking of inviting him to go out while I put baby to bed, and examine a beautiful Irish water-spaniel John had lately bought, when Benjamin appeared and announced that Mr. Brooser was required without.

"Who is it, young man?" inquired that gentleman.

"Seemingly," replied Benjamin, rather sulkily, "he don't know himself. He tried hard to recollect his name and couldn't, so I was to say 'that other party.'"

Mr. Brooser's genteel apathy vanished in a moment.

"I'm blest if it ain't that Novice!" he cried, starting up with a movement that imparted to the whole house a sensation like a gentle shock of earthquake. "Where is he?"

"Your Novice!" I repeated. "The poor thing. I hope, Benjamin, you have not left him standing in the draught. It might cost the child his life! Conduct him instantly into your master's study. There's a nice sofa——"

"I—I—think, 'm," said Benjamin, hesitating, "the gentleman's a little the worse for liquor."

"The Novice drunk!" said Mr. Brooser. "It ain't on the cards." His voice sank gradually almost to a whisper, under the influence of an emotion which interested me still more in the object of it.

"You must be mistaken, Benjamin," I said. "The young man is extremely delicate. He has been ailing——"

"Yes, he have, 'm—at the Chequers," was Benjamin's reply.

"Drunk! When he giv' me his solemn word of honour that nothing stronger than swisses should cross his lips till I give leave! No, there's many things possible, but this," said Mr. Brooser, gravely and reflectively, "this ain't possible."

"Of course it is not. Pray be calm, Mr. Brooser. You cannot tell what injurious effect may be produced upon your young ward by any sudden demonstration of anger on the part of one he loves and reveres."

"If he don't revere me now," said the champion, grinding his teeth, "he shall before he's two minutes older. And him all nohow already! Oh dear! Oh dear! When the fellow knows he can't carry as much lick as would drown a cockroach!"

I quite felt for the man, and said all I could think of to calm his agitation.

"Such excesses, my good friend, are indeed to be deplored. Still, he is young; and, with the excellent example he possesses in you,

may yet grow up to reward your pains and precepts."

"Well, I have taken some pains with him. That's where it is, you see. Didn't I knock him down fifteen times in one morning?"

"Knocked him down fifteen times! Oh, you mean arguments."

"Yes. They was. Regular floorers. And now to go a trifling with his condition like this here!"

"One indiscretion," I remarked, firmly, "cannot compromise his social condition, as you apprehend. And really, he must not be left in uncertainty as to your reception of him. Remember, Mr. Brooser, he is far from strong. It is quite possible that this debility, and perhaps a little nervousness at being left alone among strange people, may have occasioned the appearance my servant mistakes for intoxication. Pray be satisfied. Benjamin, let a bed be placed in your master's dressing-room. Harriet shall make up a nice strengthening draught, and I do hope that, after a night's careful nursing, our young friend will appear at the breakfast-table quite an altered creature."

Mr. Brooser muttered some sounds like—"It's to be hoped he 'ood." Then added, aloud:

"Would you like to see the Novice, mum? 'Tain't every one that has the chance."

I replied, with a smile, that I was the more fortunate, and entreated him to afford me that pleasure—for, indeed, it was high time that the child was in bed—and we accordingly left the room. There was no one in the hall; but, as we approached the house-door, the murmur of many voices reached my ears, and made me quicken my steps. Benjamin threw open the door, and disclosed a curious scene.

Fringing the rails outside the gravelled space in front there were at least five hundred people, chiefly men employed in the neighbouring works. They were in a state of the wildest excitement, shouting and scuffling, and were hardly prevented by the exertions of a few stalwart fellows of our own works from invading the terrace. As it was, just as we appeared a party had forced their way over.

"Where—where is the poor young man?" I asked, anxiously.

"He's among 'em," replied Benjamin, coolly.

"Among them?"

"He would go, 'm. He said they was his nix-my-dolliples."

"His what?"

"And he loved 'em all like brothers, though they've been and bonneted him cruel."

"Brooser, Brooser! The Novice! Where's your Novice?" yelled the mob.

Mr. Brooser plunged head first into the crowd, sending them, like ninepins, to the right and left; I saw him stoop and pick up something that looked like a bundle of old coats, to which was attached a battered hat. He shook this object almost savagely; then, balancing it on end, and giving it a kick to steady it, retired a pace or two, and, waving his hand, announced to me:

"The Novice!"

Never, never in my life, have my eyes rested upon a more hideous repulsive countenance than that of the truculent young ruffian thus presented. His low projecting brow, flat features, and squinting eyes, conveyed a mingled assurance of low craft and savage ferocity. He had knock-knees, and these trembled and bent under his tipsy weight, as the creature made a stupid effort to approach us. He had manifestly taken too much medicine of the wrong sort for his internal malady. I recoiled in terror and ineffable disgust.

"Brooser! Brooser! Brooser!" shouted the mob.

"You promised us to spar, you did!" roared a furious voice above the din.

"I did nothing of the kind!" bellowed Mr. Brooser yet more distinctly. "I cum here on a private wisit."

"With your Novice."

"With my Novice—o' course. I never quits him." (To the Novice.) "Stand up, you obstinate young beggar, or I'm blest if I don't knock you out o' time. As I was saying, I never quits him—leastways, seldom; and I wish I hadn't to-night, though that's rude to say, for I've been 'ausomely entertained by this 'ere kind lady, and do you think I don't like that a sight better than boosing with a lot o' roughs like you, that come here trespassing on private property? I did mean to make a purfessional toor, but I changed my mind, 'cause o' the Novice being noways fit. Wot's the matter?"

"We want to see you!" roared the half-mollified crowd.

"Well, you do see me," replied Mr. Brooser, with mild indulgence, drawing up his colossal form to its full height. "You sees me well, I hope. 'Tain't my fault, nor natur's, if you can't. Hook it! Or, if you've anything more to say, don't stand there outragging the lady, but send a depitation."

There was a consultation in the crowd, and presently a rough fellow was pushed forward as spokesman.

"We don't want fur to offend you, Mr. Brooser," said the ambassador; "neither my ladyship. We knows your walue, both on you" (I curtsied for self and colleague!), "but here's the pint. Will you set-to for a minute with your Novice?"

"Will you? Will you?" shrieked a despairing voice from the crowd.

The champion smiled compassionately, and did not immediately reply.

"Now look," he said at last—"look at what you're asking. Is that" (he pointed to the limp and cowering Novice) "a chap that Bigge Brooser, champion of the English catch-weights, can knock down in comfort? S'posin' he wasn't drunk, look at his conduct, look at his character, look at his attitude in serciety. Here's a feller, with seven to four upon him, six weeks in

training, final deposit paid o' Wednesday, fogles ordered, seconds chose! Yet this highly favioured indiwiddial, in the beautifullest condition (though some says puffy), can so far forget his duty, first, to his backers; secondly, to the Thames and Mersey Navigation Company, what purwides the boat; thirdly, to his conscience, as to drink himself into a condition in which six stun seven could make mince-meat of him! Pah! I blush for my purfession; I gives it up; I withdraw into private life; and I goes back to Fiddle-court, Portugal-lane, Hay-market, an altered man!"

Emotion choked the champion's utterance, but an immense cheer from the mob replied to this address.

Then the Novice raised his drooping head, and spoke:

"I s—say, gov'nor!"

"Hold your tongue, sir," said Mr. Brooser.

At this moment a man stepped from the crowd, and placed his hand on the speaker's shoulder.

"I want you, young fellow," he said. "I beg your pardon, ma'am" (touching his hat to me). "It don't anyways affect you, Mr. Brooser. You always fit fair, when you did fight. But I was looking for this young gentleman before he went into training. It's for that poaching matter down at Squire Maundrell's. The keeper's very bad."

Mr. Brooser growled that he 'sposed it was all right, but why wasn't he took afore?

The policeman remarked that nobody called him anything but "Brooser's Novice," whereby he only got knowledge of him to-day, when the young man was too drunk to forget his name.

I have only to add that the Novice has changed his trainers, Brooser being superseded by the warders of the county jail, with every prospect of commencing an entirely new novitiate at Bermuda; that Mr. Brooser, though much shocked and subdued, remained to smoke a cigar with his patron John, and returned to town a little comforted; and that neither Persons nor Parties are likely again to invade the quiet precincts of Myrtle Grange—our address.

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